EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF SOCIAL CLASS, IDENTITY, AND SELF-REGULATION DURING THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

An intersection is a place where two or more points meet. Within the intersection, a new space is created. The new space shapes how the world is experienced, interpreted, and understood. The purpose of this research was to explore the intersections of social class, identity, and self-regulation during the transition from high school to college. The study highlighted how seven lower middle or working class first-year college students made meaning of their experiences during this transition. For the participants in this research, the new space created within the intersection of social class, identity, and self-regulation was framed by a sense of determination. This sense of determination may be what set these students apart from their peers who share similar social class backgrounds. While their determination may have helped them work towards their goals, this sense of determination may also be part of a hegemonic discourse that predominates what defines middle class status.

Educational researchers have demonstrated that social class influences academic achievement, including graduation and drop-out rates (Hochschild,
Students who come from middle class backgrounds perform better in school and are more likely to attend and graduate from college. Poor students lack academic and career role models and often times need to work long hours or accumulate life-long debt to afford college (Aries & Seider, 2005, Holstrom et al, 2002). Educational psychologists have consider social class as a variable in their research, but not as a defining contextual factor that shapes identity or development of other skills such as self-regulation. This research responded to the challenge that educational psychologists need to consider the implications of economic context and stratification in their research (Murdock, 2000).

Qualitative methods were used to understand how participants made meaning of social class, identity and self-regulation during the transition from high school to college. The participants were all recipients of the Land Grant Opportunity Scholarship. To qualify for the scholarship, the participants needed to demonstrate financial need and academic success. Students were interviewed four times during their first year of college. Collecting data during the transition provided a window into how students made meaning of social class, identity, and self-regulation during this time away from parents and life-long friends.
Interview data were analyzed using open and axial coding techniques. Analysis yielded several themes including determination as an umbrella theme that framed how the participants understood both themselves and others. All of the participants believed that determination would allow anyone to change his or her social class status. This in turn influenced their sense of identity.

Determination fueled the participants’ volition to be who they wanted to be and rise above economic circumstances. Lastly, determination shaped the participants’ self-regulation in terms of the goals that they articulated and their self-efficacy toward achieving those goals. While determination may prove useful to these students and their goals, I also recognize that the participants’ belief in determination may also be a result of a larger hegemonic discourse that surfaces from a middle class work ethos.

Findings from this research have implications for how high schools and colleges can work with students who come from lower middle, working class and working poor backgrounds. Above all, the experiences and words from participants re-taught me to treat each and every student not as a number or statistic, but rather as an individual who has the capacity to be determined, self-regulated, and has the ability to work toward his or her dreams.
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I also am appreciative of my co-adviser, Anita Woolfolk Hoy. Anita willingly stepped in as co-adviser during the final months of this project. Her help allowed me to finish in a timely manner and her insight improved the quality of the dissertation. Dr. Woolfolk Hoy’s expertise in educational psychology, helped to ensure that my knowledge of this field is more thorough and complete. I appreciate her help, wisdom, and guidance.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

My partner, Bob, was the first to graduate from college in his family. His dad worked in a factory and his mom was the dispatcher for the police station in his hometown of Hicksville, Ohio. How did he make it out of this environment, earn both his baccalaureate and master’s degrees, and enter into the white-collar world of corporate finance? The combination of his continued sense of drive and achievement has not been hindered by his working class background. In fact, in some ways his social class identity has been a source of motivation for his achievements. Yet, Bob’s background has gone against the literature and research related to economic status and academic achievement.

Poverty has been linked to poor academic performance. Conversely, wealth has been related to high achievement on standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT (Woolfolk, 2005). In terms of previously established research, Bob’s social class status, lack of resources, and role models should have limited both his educational achievements and his subsequent earning potential.
Bob’s hope to transcend his circumstances fueled his drive for a better and a different life. Bob’s story framed this researched and has been echoed by the research participants who shared similar experiences.

Social stratification has influenced access to both material and immaterial goods, services, networks, and resources. Understanding how social stratification, specifically social class, operates in United States society has been complicated and has also been analyzed using a variety of measures and perspectives. The purpose of this study was to examine the intersections among and between social class, identity development, and the use of self-regulated learning strategies as adolescents experience the transition from high school to college. This research was anchored by three different areas: social class, identity development, and self-regulated learning. Questions regarding definitions of social class, its importance, how we understand identity, and how we develop and use self-regulated learning strategies were at the center of this research. This area of research draws upon interdisciplinary work from psychology, sociology, and education. Within the following, I present the study rationale, research questions that have focused the study, the theoretical framework, research design, and the operational definitions that have guided the work.
Rationale

In 2004, The New York Times determined that looking at issues surrounding social class in the United States required the attention of a dedicated team of reporters. Throughout 2004, journalists investigated the myriad quandaries surrounding social class in the United States. Consumption patterns, religious affiliations, race, political beliefs, and political party membership were all considered factors that could be used as predictors to determine one’s social class background in the latter part of the 20th century. Today these descriptors do not provide accurate predictability into one’s social class background (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005). Based on the blurriness of these outward markers of social class, perhaps social class has become less relevant as a measure of stratification.

When Scott and Leonhardt explored issues related to wealth, they found that the gaps between social classes had widened. They explain, “being born in the elite in the U.S. gives you a constellation of privileges that very few people in the world have ever experienced”. Furthermore, they quote Levine, an economist studying social mobility, who stated, “Being born poor in the U.S. gives you disadvantages unlike anything in Western Europe and Japan and Canada” (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005, p. 14).

Further evidence from the U.S. Congressional Budget Office highlight the divisions within income levels: “The after-tax income of the top 1 percent of
American households jumped 139 percent, to more than $700,000, from 1979 to 2001…the income of the middle fifth rose by just 17 percent to $43,700, and the income of the poorest fifth rose only 9 percent” (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005, p. 19).

Although class-based indicators have become less prominent, the economic disparity among the wealthy, middle-class, and poor in our nation continues to widen. Life expectancy, residential patterns, and family structure demonstrate the inequities found within American society. These economic boundaries are evident among college graduates as well (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005). “Only 41 percent of low-income students entering a four-year college managed to graduate within five years, the U.S. Department of Education found in a 2004 study, but 66 percent of high-income students did” (Leonhardt, 2005, p. 89). These statistics illustrate the chasms that have exist in economic growth between members of different social class groups. While it may be more difficult to identify social class position using indicators like political and religious affiliation, the impact of the differences in income patterns privilege some in the United States and oppress others. Looking at how these income patterns manifest themselves on the micro level in schools is important for educators, administrators, and policy makers.

These issues pertain to both high school and college educators. Attaining a college degree continues to influence a person’s social class position. However, the percentage of poor students who have attended college is
decreasing. This has been further compounded by the high dropout rate of poor and working class students (Leonhardt, 2005). Yet, social class is unexamined in the psychology research on identity and in educational psychology, where social class has been absent as an important contextual influence affecting teaching and learning (Frable, 1997; Murdock, 2000). Murdock (2000) has challenged educational psychologists to consider the implications of economic context in their research. While feminists, sociologists, educators, historians, political scientists, and economists have drawn our attention to the impact of poverty and social class on schools, a gap remains within educational psychology and psychology in general. With regard to this gap, the American Psychological Association instituted the first Committee on Socioeconomic Status in 2006 (Committee on Socioeconomic Status 2007 Annual Report). This effort indicates the need to have more research and resources dedicated to this important topic.

This study responds to that challenge and examined socioeconomic status as the context that shapes development, learning, and motivation. Even though journalists and educational sociologists have looked at how issues of poverty influence schooling, educational psychology can add a new dimension to our current understanding by looking at the role that social class plays when considering how students develop and use learning strategies. Within education, Jonathan Kozol has opened our eyes to the effects of poverty on children.
Jonathan Kozol’s analysis of the economic stratification in schools within the U.S. highlights the impact of economic difference and the effects of poverty. Kozol described East St. Louis as one of the most impoverished cities in the country. The desperate need for dental health, nutrition, and educational facilities were just the beginning. And yet the problems found in East St. Louis seemed too much for any government entity to attempt to solve. Kozol (1991) writes, “East St. Louis will likely be left just as it is for a good many years to come: a scar of sorts, an ugly metaphor of filth and overspill and chemical effusions, a place for blacks to live and die within, a place for other people to avoid when they are heading for St. Louis” (p. 39). In addition to the impact of poverty on children, educational systems serving the poor also have more difficulties. Schools with impoverished student populations tend to hire teachers who are less credentialed, have more vacant positions, have inferior facilities, fewer educational resources such as textbooks, and have to deal with higher proportions of violence (Newman, 2007, Hochschild, 2003).

Writing as a feminist, social activist, and African American critical theorist, bell hooks (2000) raises the importance of considering class within issues of identity and networks of power. She states, “Our nation is fast becoming a class-segregated society where the plight of the poor is forgotten and the greed of the rich is morally tolerated and condoned” (vii). hooks provides a rich description of her early days as an undergraduate student wrestling with the multiple
oppressions associated with being a Black, working class woman. Her description of her roommate at Stanford was particularly poignant to gain an understanding of class differences and the pivotal role social class plays when trying to “get ahead” by earning a college degree.

hooks (2000) describes her roommate in the following way:

Like my friend during freshman year she shared the understanding of what it was like to be a have-not in a world of haves. But unlike me she was determined to become one of them. If it meant she had to steal nice clothes to look the same as they did, she had no problem taking these risks. If it meant having a privileged boyfriend who left bruises on her body now and then, it was worth the risk. Cheating was worth it. She believed the world the privileged had created was all unfair – all one big cheat; to get ahead one had to play the game (34).

Playing the game in this excerpt refers to possessing agency with regard to social class. In other words, hooks’ roommate played the game to advance her social class status. In other countries, like Great Britain, social class status is seen as more rigid. The lack of rigidity has been part of the American view of social class. Blurry categories have created the foundation of our class system. While there were distinctions between the “haves” and the “have-nots”, the groupings of poor, working, middle, upper-middle, and elite have evaded clear definition. Issues of geography, race, and gender also confound these categories.
The multi-dimensional effects of social class on the fabric of American life urge continued study. Attempting to understand how social class positions shape understandings of community within our economy and culture is at the heart of this study. Additionally, transitions provide a critical moment of change that promotes reflective thinking and awareness. The transition from high school to college provides the opportunity to study social class awareness, identity development, and both the development and use of self-regulated learning strategies.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the intersections among and between social class, identity development, and the use of self-regulated learning strategies. Specific questions that guided the research included the following:

1. How did adolescents from lower socioeconomic means experience the transition to college?

2. How did they gain a sense of self that was informed both by their socioeconomic status, self-regulated learning, and by the new academic demands of college?

3. In what ways did the students make meaning of their experiences that demonstrated the intersection of social class, identity, and self-regulated learning?
These questions guided this research that investigated how social class background (parent’s income, level of education, occupation, taste and style in food, clothing, art, and entertainment, among other factors) influenced the transition from the familiar life with one’s family to the unfamiliar and uncharted territory of starting life on one’s own in the collegiate context. Theory has also assisted me in studying these questions.

_Theoretical Lenses_

Theories provide explanatory power. A theoretical framework has aided me by allowing me to take seemingly disconnected information and find the relationships among and between concepts. A theoretical lens provides a perspective to influence research questions, data collection, and data analysis. The theoretical framework shapes the ontology, epistemology, and sometimes the methodologies used within a disciplinary tradition (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Davis, 2003). Additionally, not all theories are equal in their explanatory power. Lecompte and Preissle (1993) outline three categories of theory based on broad conceptions of universality.

Grand theories are the most comprehensive theories followed by middle range or formal theories. Substantive theories are those that are limited to specific groups or contexts.
Grand theories, formal / middle range theories, and substantive theories have helped me to make meaning of the questions that I have asked, the data I have collected and analyzed and the story of the data that describes my findings and results. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the theoretical traditions that guide my inquiry.
Figure 1. Use of theory within intersections of social class, identity, and self-regulated learning (Lecompte & Priessley, 1993 and Davis, 2000).
Grand Theories

Grand theories are those theoretical traditions that guide the intellectual directions of a discipline. Grand theories shape the nature of knowledge and we understand knowledge (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Within the context of this research, two grand theoretical traditions have guided my work: constructivist theory and critical theory. Even though both theoretical traditions informed the conception of the research, constructivist theory played a more prominent role with data analysis. The findings discussed in chapter 4 are primarily based on a constructivist interpretation of the data. Within chapter 5, I consider how a critical theory lens would lend itself to data analysis. Although I did not conduct a critical analysis of the data, I outline how that process could be done in the future.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivist theory is the human capacity to construct or create knowledge. People make meaning directly through experience or by reflecting upon that experience. The knowledge construction takes place in a socio-historical-political context that frames this meaning-making process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, our meanings become linked to our direct experiences as humans. Two people may experience a similar event but the meanings they ascribe to that event could be very different based upon their individual perspective to create meaning. For example, in the context of this study, two
students may be enrolled in the same high school and the same math course. One student may find the instructor’s pedagogical techniques very effective for learning and the other student may often fall asleep due to sheer boredom in the same class. These different students would construct vastly different meanings regarding the quality of instruction for their learning.

In other words, constructivist theory helps to see the world as situated, perspectival, and idiosyncratic. The meaning that is understood depends upon the process by which the individual (or group) constructs and interprets the event or phenomena (Denzin, 1997; Gergen, 1985). Constructivist theories have guided this research in that participants were asked to describe the meaning they have gained from their life experiences. Even though the participants in this research experienced the same transition to college, each participant has a different perspective regarding the experience and what it has meant to his or her sense of self. Within the data, some participants shared similar interpretations while others diverged entirely.

Constructivist theory provided me with a lens to attempt to understand why and how the research participants knew, felt, and experienced their lives in a meaningful way. Constructivism differs from critical theory by not recognizing the power relationships involved in knowledge construction. Constructivism, while perspectival, accepts meaning making at face value and does not look beneath
the surface to analyze how networks of power influence knowledge or experience.

*Critical Theory*

Critical theory is based on the premise that power shapes what is known and can be known. Power relationships dominate the construction of knowledge. Power privileges some voices and marginalizes and silences others. Using a critical theory lens helps to highlight the dynamic networks of power that may be functioning (Kincheleoe & McLaren, 2000). Within the context of this research, critical theory has helped me to study social class. Social class and its related access to economic and social resources benefit some and hinder others.

Studying how power functions within social class relationships has been an important aspect of this research. The emergence of critical theory rejects notions of economic determinism. In other words, economic background does influence one’s future position in society. However, other factors such as race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation may also influence how one acts within different networks of power (Kincheleoe & McLaren, 2000).

Additionally, critical theory troubles what is accepted as standard practice and allows us to look beneath that standard practice and analyze why we behave in those ways (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For example, it may be accepted that those who are poor or working class do not have the same resources and so they will struggle with a college education. This supposed belief may be based
on power structures that have recapitulated patterns of wealth and poverty. How do the wealthy maintain their status and what structures are in place to maintain economic and social stratification? Critical theory helps to illuminate the hegemony that makes power relationships pervasive.

Looking at how adolescents discussed their social class background provided a discourse to analyze the hegemony of socioeconomic background. Relating this to issues of identity development and the development and use of self-regulated learning provided a lens unto how social class influenced a sense of self as well as metacognition. Critical theory has framed how I have interpreted the relationships that have arisen from talking with the participants about their experiences. Although I accepted what they told me as “their truth” I also looked for the networks of power that shaped how they came to know that truth.

Formal/middle Range Theories

Formal / Middle range theories provide some aspects of universality while focusing a theory on a more specific topic. Differing from a grand theory, a formal/middle range theory offers explanatory power but with greater levels of specificity. The formal/middle range theories work to explain human experience and ways of knowing but do so from a more distinct perspective (Lecompte & Preissle, 1993). Bourdieu’s theories of social class, Kegan’s identity theory, and
Bandura’s social cognitive theory are middle range theories that have informed this research.

*Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Class*

Bourdieu’s theory of social class was developed using a combination of research methods and was born from a critical sociological tradition. Differing from other theories of social class, Bourdieu used both economic and cultural capital vis a vis habitus and fields to perform a critical analysis of how socioeconomic positions were reified in society (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu defined social class as a combination of one’s economic resources and one’s cultural capital. Cultural capital allows an individual to maneuver through the implicit expectations of different social class groups. Bourdieu describes habitus as how one lives cultural capital on a daily basis. For example, within the context of this study, only one student discussed volunteer work. Having the time and awareness that volunteering may lead to professional awareness and career goals is a middle class value. Debbie was the only student who discussed volunteering and she was also the only student who was raised in a more traditional middle class family. These experiences were representative of middle-class cultural capital. When enacted, this exemplifies cultural capital via habitus.

Another important concept within Bourdieu’s theory of social class is the notion of fields. Fields are the contexts in which social class is performed and
reified. A field shapes the norms, expectations, and values of the social class. A gourmet restaurant in a wealthy neighborhood is an example of a field. The clientele that visits this restaurant has a certain sense of taste and style that they expect from this type of restaurant. A gourmet restaurant would exist in a different type of field than a fast-food restaurant. A fast-food restaurant would be found where real-estate is less expensive. Customers do not expect a dining experience but rather want cheap food delivered quickly. Both of these examples create fields where we can witness habitus. Within the context of this study, the field of interest was college, in particular Ohio State University, a large public mid-western university.

*Kegan’s Identity Theory*

Kegan’s identity theory is a psychological theory using a constructive-developmental approach to describe how people gain a sense of “consciousness” (Kroger, 2004). Working within the constructivist tradition, Kegan builds from Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s theoretical positions to describe the way in which humans develop as we gain a new awareness of who we are in the world.

Central to Kegan’s theory is the tension to balance our need for awareness with the inevitable sense of loss or mourning that we experience as we become more conscious of ourselves and our surroundings. As we develop and construct a sense of self, we also lose an aspect of our previous sense of
self. Kegan describes his theory in six stages of consciousness. Within each stage, the individual gains a new sense of self that allows for a qualitatively different understanding from before. As we move through each stage of consciousness, we gain a sense of self that is oriented toward our abilities, our judgments, our goals and capabilities, our relationships, our role in society, and finally we arrive at a place of peace where we recognize the balance between awareness and loss. In other words, we journey through life dealing with the tension of loss through development as we progress to achieve an identity shaped by context. Kegan’s theory provides a lens to understand how college students make sense of what they lose and gain as they begin to define themselves outside of the context of the family.

*Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory*

Prior to the introduction of Social Learning Theory, there was a debate regarding learning and its place within psychology. Some, like Horace B. English believed that learning was not to be considered part of psychology. “Now it is my suggestion that there are no such processes and that therefore the construct of learning and of the learning process are scientifically invalid” (English, 1952, p. 322). English and others believed that learning was related to behaviorism and linked to stimulus and response.

Differing from English, Thorndike, Millar, and Dollard believed that there was more to learning than stimulus and response and that perhaps mediating
Factors were involved (Millar and Dollar, 1941). Millar and Dollard (1941) first introduced the primary components of social learning theory in their work. Later Bandura (2003) expanded upon their theories by testing the role of observation and models in the learning process. Through his research on learning through observations and social models, Bandura developed one of the hallmarks of social learning theory, reciprocal causality (see Figure 2).

![Diagram of reciprocal causation](image)

**Figure 2. Bandura’s model of reciprocal causation**

Within this model, the person, behavior, and environment influence each other. The person as indicated by an individual’s thoughts, beliefs, and feelings can often influence behavior or actions. These actions can influence the environment, either social or physical. One of the primary outcomes of Bandura’s theory is that individuals have agency. Bandura (2003) defines agency stating, “Agency refers to acts done intentionally” (p. 3). Important to
Bandura’s definition is an explanation denoting that actions, although performed intentionally, may have unintentional consequences.

**Substantive Theories**

At the center of this research is the question of how socioeconomic resources relate to one’s sense of agency. To investigate this question, I drew upon two substantive theories: Jones and McEwen’s (2000) theory of multiple dimensions of identity and Zimmerman’s (2000) framework of self-regulated learning. Substantive theories provide explanatory power regarding a specific concept applicable to certain conditions. These conditions may include specific contexts or aspects of the population. Substantive theories may be aspects of larger theoretical constructs or they may be relatively new and therefore still developing their explanatory scope and depth (Lacompte and Priessle, 1993).

**Multiple Dimensions of Identity**

Jones and McEwen (2000) provide a model that helps conceptualize how we are cognizant of and recognize multiple aspects of identity. Their model draws upon a sense of core identity as articulated by Erikson (1950) and social identities as articulated by Deaux (1993). Jones and McEwen (2000) also relied upon the notion of identity salience as a mediating factor that allows for a dynamic and shifting sense of identity hierarchies that may be in play depending upon contextual influences.
Figure 3 shows the model of multiple identities. Within this model, there is a core sense of self that is surrounded by social/personal identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation and social class. The concentric circles demonstrate the dynamic nature of identity and how context determines aspects of identity salience. As seen in the outer circle, social and historical context also influence identity.
Figure 3. Jones & McEwen (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity.
Jones and McEwen’s (2000) model captures the complex and dynamic nature of identity not previously described by other theories and models. Additionally, this identity model demonstrates that contexts make some dimensions of identity more or less salient. We become more aware of different parts of who we are depending upon the social or cultural environment. Attending college, and even participating in this research study made students who participated in this study more aware of their social class. The Jones-McEwen (2000) model provides a substantive theoretical lens through which both multiple aspects of identity and the power of context can be studied.

Self-regulated learning

Zimmerman’s self-regulated learning framework describes how students act as conscious goal-directed agents who have the capacity to select strategies and then reflect on both their performance and goals. Zimmerman (2000) outlines this in a three phase process: forethought, performance, and reflection (see figure 4).
During forethought, the individual selects goals. As one moves to the performance phase, he/she evaluates self-beliefs and selects strategies to help achieve the goal that was previously conceived during the forethought phase. The last phase of self-regulated learning takes, reflection, the student thinks about his/her performance relative to the goals and strategies that have been used to work towards that goal.

Zimmerman argues that developing the capacity to engage in self-regulation is one of the defining accomplishments of adolescent development. The changing nature of schools requires that students gain more autonomy with regard to their engagement with academic work. Self-regulated learning skills help students to meet the challenges associated with increasing independence that takes place in middle and high school (Zimmerman, 2002). The transition to college also requires that students refine and exercise self-regulated learning skills.
However, students engage in self-regulation with differing levels of sophistication and expertise. Educational researchers debate the role that social and environmental contexts in influencing the acquisition and use of self-regulated learning skills (Zimmerman, 2000). Within the context of this debate, researchers think of social and environmental contexts in terms of how external actors (e.g. teachers), physical environments (e.g. moving out of a noisy class), or the student may influence the social or physical environment and how this may influence the development of self-regulated learning.

Zimmerman describes four developmental levels to acquire regulatory skills. These include observation, emulation, self-control, and self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000). Having access to a model to observe is critical to developing self-regulated learning skills.

Researchers from different theoretical perspectives have failed to recognize how a student’s development of self-regulated learning may be the result of the intersection between family/community and socioeconomic class (Zimmerman, 2000). This research explored the topic by looking explicitly as how students engaged in self-regulated learning. How did one’s access to financial and social resources influence the ability to self-regulate? Specifically, within the context of this study, what type of reflection (metacognition) did students engage that influenced their goals and strategy use? How did their
socioeconomic background promote or hinder the development and use of self-regulated learning?

While the grand, formal/middle, and substantive have informed this research study, it is also important to note that the theories that guide this work, also engage in tension with each other at times.

Theoretical Tensions

The grand theories framing this research conflict with each other on an epistemological level. While constructivists agree that we make meaning out of our experiences and interpretations of the world, critical theorists contend that the meaning that constructivists make is based within networks of power (Kamberelis and Dimitriardis, 2005). As a result, this research draws upon constructivist theory to see how the participants made meaning from their experiences regarding social class, identity, and self-regulation. I then used critical theory to critique the findings related to determination. While what the participants say is their truth, their truth is also contextualized by larger societal discourses that perpetuate a belief that through determination all goals and aspirations can be achieved (Mills, 2004). Drawing upon critical theory requires me as the researcher to recognize these discursive elements found within the data.
Pre-pilot Research

To explore this research area, I conducted three initial interviews with adolescents including a high school senior and two first year college students (Poirier & Bischoff, 2006). Two of the students came from middle class backgrounds and one from a working/lower class background. Questions focused on their perceived challenges and successes experienced in both their academic and social lives and how their socioeconomic statuses played a role in these situations. The interviews revealed the adolescents were not necessarily aware of the roles their social class statuses played in their lives. When asked if money had anything to do with their access to resources or the decisions that they made, the students said no. Some of the themes that emerged from the interviews included their fears about paying for college, their need to move away from home to find a future career, and their desire to avoid burdening their family and friends with problems (Poirier & Bischoff, 2006).

Based on findings from the pre-pilot, there were necessary conditions that needed to be included to better understand the intersections found in social class, identity, and self-regulated learning. These included prolonged engagement via multiple interactions with research participants, establishing trust and rapport between researcher and participants, introducing social class using material goods and other more concrete identifiers, and asking participants to discuss social class in terms of other people who they know as a means of
comparison. This initial research demonstrated the complexities involved in studying social class with adolescents and has framed the subsequent research design.

**Working Definitions**

A set of operational, or working, definitions for integral constructs provided the foundation for the research project. These include late adolescents/emerging adults, identity, and social class.

Late Adolescents/ Emerging Adults: Late adolescents/emerging adults are between 18 and 25 years old. In addition, Arnett (2004) describes this developmental period by discussing the exploration for identity and how often times these young adults will feel “in-between”. Because their identity is still malleable, these emerging adults may be seen as instable, yet their instability is also characterized by possibilities of future notions of self. “The goal of their self-focusing is learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person, but emerging adults do not see self-sufficiency as a permanent state. Rather they view it as a necessary step before committing themselves to lasting relationships with others, in love and work” (Arnett, 2004, p. 15). Late adolescence is the time in which identity is most salient and this age group offers the greatest relevancy to study issues of identity.

Identity: Identity is a complex term that can take on multiple meanings within social science settings. For the purposes of this research, identity is one's
sense of self. Identity is a core understanding of who we are, what we believe and value, and how that defines the self in relation to others. Kroger (2004) provides the following definition:

[Identity invariably gets defined (at various stages of the life cycle) as a balance between that which is taken to be self and that considered to be other. The means by which we differentiate ourselves from other people in our lives as well as from our own organic functions constitutes the very core of our experiences of personal identity” (p. 10).]

Within this research study, I employed Kegan’s constructivist-developmental theories related to identity as a primary lens to understand construct. “Kegan views the formation of identity as a lifelong evolutionary process of meaning-making… identity formation is about how that which is regarded as self (or subject) is structured, lost, and re-formed” (Kroger, 2004, p. 13). Kegan’s view allows for the construction of identity to take place within the dynamic interplay of both cognition and affect. Meaning-making is context dependent and must involve separation of self from these contextual understandings. Adolescence is characterized by the process involved in coming to know the self. The changing nature of context with regard to social class also informs the meaning-making.

Self-regulated learning: Self-regulated learning is defined as one’s capacity to develop goals, use strategies and behavior to help accomplish those goals and then actively reflect on performance in relationship to those same
goals. Within the context of the participants’ socioeconomic background, I explored strategy selection, use and subsequent reflection.

Social class: Social class relates to one’s economic position within a society. However, social class transcends income level to also include occupational prestige, level of education, and taste. I defined social class as “a group of people who share a similar economic position in society based on their wealth and income” (Newman, 2004, p. 46). Class standing directly influences cultural capital and the ability to attain higher education, access to well-paying jobs and the availability of adequate health care” (Newman, 2007, p. 46-47). Within this research, I used objective measures such as income, occupation, and educational attainment to assess social class positions. I also relied upon subjective measures such as taste, style, and personal definitions to assess social class.

Looking at issues of social class relates directly to how the society is organized. Wealth and power determines access to resources. Social class position grants or limits access to material and non-material resources such as social networks and cultural knowledge. One’s experiences as part of a social class group help to shape understandings of the self and others. Within the context of this research, social class and socioeconomic status were synonymous.
Summary

Within the introduction to this research, I presented the rationale for why educational psychology needs to consider the context of social class when investigating identity and self-regulation. Additionally, the impact of social class needs be addressed within the context of psychological identity literature. The impacts of poverty on children stratify our society in ways that perpetuate inequity and oppression. This research provides an opportunity to learn from a small group of students who are striving to change their social class status. The scholarship that they have received resists the predictability of income and academic success.

As I introduced the research, I described how my partner, Bob, has pushed against the boundaries of social class throughout his life. Yet in America, the boundaries of social class have and continue to become more invisible (hooks, 2000; Leonhardt, 2003). In other words, we do not really know who should be middle class and who should be upper class. Bob did not focus on these invisible boundaries. Rather he prioritized his goals and worked toward them regardless of any habitus that may have limited his access to upper class behavior or knowledge.
Instead, Bob has “risen above” by maintaining focus, exercising resiliency, practicing humility, and not letting others use social class to confine who he is or how he should behave. The participants in this study display a similar set of characteristics that have started them on the path towards a different social class status.
CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Frameworks

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the theoretical frameworks and related literature that informs this study. To explore the intersections of social class, identity, and self-regulation for adolescents, I drew upon the literature base related to social class, identity, adolescence and self-regulation as a developmental moment that takes place during adolescence.

Social Class

Social class and socioeconomic status are often used in Western nations to understand inequality and social stratification (Newman, 2007). Social class can be defined as “a group of people who share a similar economic position in society based on their wealth and income” (Newman, 2004, p. 46). Class standing directly influences cultural capital and people’s ability to attain higher education, their access to well-paying job and the availability of adequate health care” (Newman, 2007, p. 46-47).
Similar to social class, socioeconomic status differs from class by indicating the level of prestige that a person occupies in society based on wealth and access to power (Newman, 2007, Woolfolk, 2006). For the purposes of this research, I considered conceptions of social class in relation to identity and self-regulation during late adolescence. To better understand conceptions of social class, I explored frameworks from Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu. I considered research related to the construction of social class for adolescents in high school and college to examine empirical understandings of social class.

**Marxist and Weberian notions of social class**

In his work, *Class* (1999), Andrew Milner charts the history of the study and negotiation of social class within intellectual traditions. Milner begins with Marxism and its description of class between “relations of productions” and “productive forces” (1999, p. 17). Marx established the division between those who produce and those who own production to shape class-based society and categories. Milner continues describing Weber’s notions of class:

> We may speak of a ‘class’ when (1) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, in so far as (2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labor markets. (Weber, 1948b, p. 181) (1999, p. 66)

Thus it becomes evident that a definition of class is more elaborate than labor or capital ownership. Weber’s definition expounds on some of Marx’s
foundation to include segments of society that Marx did not think would progress (i.e. the petty bourgeoisie such as clerical staff). Neo-Weberian class scholar, John H. Goldthorpe elaborated on Weber’s ideas and created a systematic classification of occupational categories by which society could be organized into classes. This hierarchy originally created contained 12 categories and then subsequently was refined to include 11. Some of these include higher service class, which included “higher grade professionals, managers of large businesses, large proprietors” as well ‘‘subaltern’ service class (lower grade professionals, managers of small businesses, supervisors of non-manual employees) and others (Milner, 1999, p. 79). Income and type of occupation become the prime determinants within this scheme.

Bourdieuian notions of social class

One of the more contemporary scholars of social class is Pierre Bourdieu, who bridges several aspects of economic, social, and cultural identifiers to create his social class designations. Bridging both objective measures such as income and occupation with subjective measures such as social capital, Bourdieu clarifies social class as the relation between economic capital and cultural capital (Swartz, 1999). Bourdieu also differs from Marx and Weber in that he considers class in action vis a vis habitus and fields.

Habitus for Bourdieu is an enacted sense of class-based practices. The following defines Bourdieu’s concept:
A system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed as a function of structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu, 1990h, p. 53) (Swartz, 1999, pp. 100-101).

Habitus functions as the production and reproduction of the lived-classed experiences. Habitus is not necessarily conscious, but rather an internalized sense of how to behave, what to say and do in certain contexts and situations. Habitus may be reflected in taste, language, and consumption (Swartz, 1999).

Fields create a class based context where taste is produced and consumed. Fields structure taste and perpetuate habitus. There is a relationship that exists between the production of cultural goods such as art, literature, fashion, and the consumption of those goods. The demand for “high culture” increases as its exclusivity increases. This awareness of these cultural commodities and the ability to purchase them re-establish class-based boundaries. Similarly, the ability to produce these products is only done in certain class-based circumstances. Bourdieu (1984) explains this in the following:

For the dominant class, the relationship between supply and demand takes the form of a pre-established harmony. The competition for luxury goods, emblems of ‘class’ is one dimension of the struggle to impose the dominant principle of domination, of which this class is the site; and the strategies it calls for, whose common feature is that they are oriented towards maximizing the distinctive profit of exclusive possessions, must necessarily use
different weapons to achieve this common function. On the supply side, the field of production need only follow its own logic, that of distinction, which always leads it to be organized in accordance with a structure analogous to that of the symbolic systems which it produces by its functioning and in which each element performs a distinctive function (p. 232).

Thus we begin to see that the relationship between cultural capital is, in part, produced by the class-based cultural fields where goods are produced and purchased. It is the fields which establish class-based boundaries and allow consumer behavior and market production forces to shape class-based boundaries. An exclusive couture boutique does not open in an area where the fashion is not known and subsequently purchased. Similarly, a lower-end thrift store cannot afford the rent in an upper-class fashion district. The supply and purchase of cultural capital is produced in fields that define and limit class-based behavior.

Class for Bourdieu is the combination of economic and cultural capital defined through habitus and enacted in fields that recapitulate class-based structures. Money, taste, culture, and attitude define class. Economic capital exemplifies a more objective attribute of social class. However, others such as habitus and field are more subjective in nature. Moving away from the macro understanding of social class, we now turn to look at how social class relationships operate and are understood in a context where social classes sometimes come together: the college and university.
Social Class and Late Adolescence

The literature related to class consciousness and its impact within educational settings is primarily found within sociology. Looking at issues of social class through the lens of psychology, and more specifically identity, is more limited (Frable, 1997). Similar to Ethier and Deaux’s (1994) findings, studies examining issues related to social class within the college and university establish the importance of context in relationship to class awareness and salience.

For example, Aries and Seider (2005) studied how different collegiate environments influence social class identity. For this research, students from lower class and upper class backgrounds were interviewed in two different university settings: an elite private liberal arts college and a public state university. The students from lower class backgrounds at the elite institution were more aware of their social class identity when compared to the students who attended the public university. A trend found in the research was that this group of students experienced feelings of “inadequacy, inferiority, and intimidation” (Aries & Seider, 2005, p. 426). These feelings were characterized by use of language and accent, comparison of parental occupational prestige, lack of “worldly experiences” (e.g. traveling abroad), and general feelings of intimidation related to wealth and money (Aries & Seider, 2005).
Students who attended the public state university did not experience their social class identity in the same ways. These students did not experience feeling “less than” in their college environment. The differences between social classes were not as explicit, and students were able to look past this dimension of diversity as they constructed meaning in their new environment.

Similarly, Ostrove (2003) conducted a study where she surveyed and interviewed women who attended Smith College, an elite private women’s college in Massachusetts, in the 1960s. This study focused on the women’s memories of their collegiate experiences. Ostrove and Long (2001) conducted similar research with women at a competitive liberal arts school in Minnesota. Similar to Aries and Seider (2005), the results from these studies indicate greater class consciousness among women from working/lower class backgrounds. Although Ostrove’s (2003) study indicates that the women from upper-class backgrounds remembered that differences existed, the studies involving upper-class students who were in the midst of their collegiate experiences do not indicate that these students were cognizant of their own or others social class identities (Aries & Seider, 2005, Ostrove & Long, 2001). It seems as though life experience, maturity, and exposure to the role of social class may guide these memories as reported in Ostrove’s (2003) research. The pervasive invisibility of the way that social class functions seems to prevent this awareness when one comes from a privileged background (Ostrove & Long, 2001, hooks, 2004).
Kuriloff and Reichert (2003) provide another perspective by conducting their research in an all-male elite independent high school. Their analysis of the experiences of students from different social classes differs somewhat from the previous research in terms of setting, sample, and findings. Kurlioff and Reichert’s (2003) research took place in an environment where the students from the upper-class composed the “center” of the school’s social life. Many of the boys attend the school for their entire academic careers and they are labeled, “Lifers” (Kurlioff & Reichert, 2003, p. 755). Boys who transfer into the school and come from different social class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds are termed, “Recruits” (Kurlioff & Reichert, 2003, p. 755). The “Recruits” find themselves at the margins of the school’s social life.

The findings from their research describe a “hegemonic cultural capital” at work within the school culture. Kurlioff and Reichert (2003) define this term: “‘hegemonic [or dominant] cultural capital’ reflects deeply embedded values, skills, language codes, dispositions, tastes, and knowledge that are taken for granted as representing the ‘best’ by dominant classes, by schools, and by many parents (Foley, 1990; Bourdieus, 1984)” (p. 753). The hegemonic cultural capital at work in the school shapes norms and expectations for behavior both in and outside of the classroom.

According to Kurlioff and Reichert’s (2003) research, the students from the upper-class backgrounds, the “Lifers”, have a difficult time explicitly recognizing
the hegemonic cultural capital working in the school environment. Yet, they do discuss how they see “Recruits” not fitting in. The “Lifers” saw behavior that may be contrary to established norms as fake and interpreted this as hypocritical in comparison to the cultural expectation espoused by the school. The awareness of how class influences the hegemonic cultural capital was absent from the students’ sense of the school culture. This lack of awareness shaped their views of behavior. They knew that there were differences among students, but the students from upper-class backgrounds were not able to identify what defined and characterized those differences. The White students from lower classes and some ethnic/religious minority boys who were few in number were also unaware of the systemic inequalities that stratified the school environment. With their lack of awareness and subsequent feelings of shame and invisibility, they blamed themselves and their lack of ability and/or knowledge for not fitting in (Kuriloff and Reichert, 2003).

However, this was not the case for African American students. These students worked together to cope with the hegemonic cultural capital. In a collaborative effort, the African American students recognized the hegemony at work and were able to incorporate aspects of this habitus into their behavior. Additionally, these students pulled together to create a student organization that would help to support their efforts to succeed in this exclusive environment. The
effort to forge alliances within this larger community allowed them to adapt without stripping them of their own cultural heritage (Kuriloff & Reichert, 2003). Although similar to previous research, Kuriloff and Reichert (2003) incorporate issues of race and ethnicity within the analysis of social class differences. Conducting research in an all-boys elite independent school provides a different setting to learn about social class and subsequent notions of belonging and internalized feelings of shame and inadequacy. The research also points to the upper-class students' recognition of difference and how some students simply do not “fit in”. While this recognition may be context specific, it may also be related to gender. Regardless, the findings illustrate new perspectives related to how social class may operate in a homogeneous setting that reinforces hegemonic cultural capital.

Holmstrom, Karp, & Gray (2002) look at the issue of class and higher education from a middle class point of view. Their research followed students and their families as high school seniors applied and prepared to transition to college. The participants in the research were all college-bound and from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds. The research indicated that these students were more concerned with issues like doing laundry, budgeting money, and time management than they were with new academic demands.

The emphasis on the middle to upper-middle class leads Holmstrom, Karp, and Gray to believe that these parents realized they can buy a certain
quality of life for their children based upon the type of collegiate institution their children attend. The authors contend that the focus of many parents is to ensure that their children can attend a college or university and not have other concerns to distract from their educational pursuits. The students in their study were worried about life-management concerns that they would encounter in college. Many of the students discussed that they previously have not had to do laundry and they worried about budgeting their money. The parents’ commitment toward their children’s educational and extra-curricular pursuits means that the children lack experience with basic life skills that they need as they begin to care for themselves. The middle/upper-middle-class commitment toward a higher education degree has changed the way that children think about and experience convenience and life management.

Stuber’s (2006) work explores the discourses surrounding social class from the perspectives of both middle and working class first year college students. Stuber investigated how students make sense of social class through their descriptions. Stuber's (2006) research confirms the salience of social class awareness among those who are from working class backgrounds. However, Stuber’s work takes a new turn allowing us to see how one’s social class background frames an understanding of those from different backgrounds. For example, the students from working class backgrounds believed that students from middle/upper class backgrounds could buy themselves out of things. They
also believed that their ability to work hard earned them a desk in the collegiate classroom.

Additionally, when Stuber (2006) explored how these students compared themselves to others from a different class background, they compared themselves with those perceived to be from a wealthier background. The students did not think of themselves as privileged, yet those students who have experienced economic hardship were invisible to them. This is exemplified in the student’s discussion of cars and spring break trips in particular. Stuber (2006) describes this in the following:

Erika Douglas, a Big State sophomore, claimed that she’s not “a rich girl” because while other students are driving their BMWs around campus, she just drives her “little Jeep Wrangler.” Fellow Big State sophomore Chad Bush made a remarkably similar comparison, speaking at length about those “other” students who drive around in Mercedes and the like. When asked what kind of car he drives, he said, somewhat sheepishly, “I drive a Jeep. It’s my baby.”….these students made no reference at all to their fellow peers who do not own cars…” (p. 309).

The students’ ideas about social class were based upon comparisons with those who they perceive as “truly wealthy.” Their focus on the wealthy, blinded their awareness of those who may not have economic privilege. Stuber (2006) posits that development of social class identity is enacted within this contextual environment and based upon comparison.

Stuber’s (2006) research highlights the hegemonic nature of the value in money. As Americans, we do not recognize our own privilege and thus we do
not consider ourselves wealthy. We perceive economic privilege as defined by luxury cars, not just having a car. Our desire to earn more money and “do better” is juxtaposed with a devaluing of pride. When we are seen as having pride in our possessions or our wealth at the expense of others, it is interpreted negatively. The students in Stuber’s (2006) research articulated that they did not want to be perceived as “snobby” or “better than.” Within the hegemony of the drive for wealth, we are unable to recognize how this shapes our social class position. We strive to climb the mountain of economic prosperity, and there seems to be an inherent fear about looking down and recognizing the faces and social class positions of those below us.

The research reviewed demonstrates that privilege accompanies a lack of awareness of social class position. The students who do not “fit in” with their similar peers recognize their social class position. Lawler (2005) argues that this comes from a general notion of disgust directed toward those from the lower class. Disgust separates the poor from the middle and defines what it means to be “not poor.” Yet it seems as though the awareness of this disgust goes unrecognized by most who assume a position of privilege. Considering the role that the social context plays in shaping identity is at the heart of this research. Examining sociological and psychological theories helps to bridge the gaps in the literature presented thus far.
Although social class within psychology has not necessarily been a burgeoning area of study, there is evidence of related research as early as the 1949 publication of Richard Centers’ *Psychology of the Social Classes*. Within this founding study, Centers surveyed Americans to define social class and how notions of social class related to political attitudes and beliefs. The publication of *Psychology of Social Class* coincided with Cold War and fears surrounding communism. The American public was concerned with Marxist views of social class divisions and how they may influence the American political and economic system. Analyzing social class through this lens became important within this environment.

Since that time, research related to social class and psychology has focused on the interrelated nature of the self and the social context. The premise of the following research rests upon a premise established by Adams and Marshall (1996), “An individual’s personal or social identity not only is shaped, in part, by the living systems around the individual, but the individual’s identity can shape and change the nature of these living systems” (p. 432). As I attempt to understand the relationships between social class and identity formation, I work to explore how individuals shape their social environment and how the social environment constructs identity. The following study was influenced by Kegan’s constructive-developmental theories as well as the empirical research related to late adolescents and their constructions of social class as they make the
transition from high school to college. In addition to studying how social class influences notions of identity, this study investigated how social class related to motivation via self-regulated learning. I looked at self-regulation as a collection of resources that was influenced by one’s social class background. Before considering self-regulation and its relationship to social class and late adolescence, I present the literature on identity and how it supports this research.

Identity

Who am I? What do I value and believe? How do my relationships with others define me? What is my role in the context of a social world? How do I relate with others based on my similarities and my differences? How do I perceive myself now, and how does this relate to my future vision of my possible self? These questions shape our sense of identity. Questions of identity and how it is constructed span diverse fields of study. Philosophy, social science, and literature are three domains that have looked at these questions in their respective fields of study. While the answers to these questions regarding identity are timeless, psychologists have ventured into studying how these questions are answered from individual and group perspectives. The following exploration of identity embarks from developmental theory.

Developmental theories work to characterize and explain changes that take place at different points in the life span. While there are distinctive differences among developmental perspectives, they typically focus on physical,
cognitive, and emotional/social areas (Burke, 2006; Woolfolk, 2006). Developmental theories also differ in their orientation toward continuity and discontinuity, the importance of context, and the competing roles of nurture versus nature (Burke, 2006). Inherent in a developmental perspective is that a qualitative change takes place. Developmental maturation is more than just an increase in something (e.g. cognitive capacity). Instead, development implies an evolution to what previously existed. Kroger (2004) articulates this distinction, “…the developmental orientation attempts to detail how that which existed at earlier life stages ‘becomes transformed into something related to, but also different than, what existed earlier’ (Breger 1974: 3)” (p. 8).

The following exploration of identity considers seminal work in ego identity, social/ethnic identity, and constructivist views concerning the interaction and synthesis regarding multiple dimensions of identity. Erik Erikson’s seminal work surrounding notions of identity begin our discussion of relevant literature.

*Ego Identity*

Erikson’s (1950, 1968) initial work regarding identity theorizes that our identity shapes our sense of self so that we may move form adolescence into adulthood. Gaining a sense of who we are in terms of our occupational interests, our relationships with others, and recognition of our own values and beliefs moves us developmentally so that we may have a foundation of self from which
to build as the progression from adolescence to adulthood takes place (Burke, 2006).

Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development posits that human development rests on a series of crises. With each resolution, we are set on a developmental trajectory. The presentation of crises begins during infancy when, as babies, we have to determine if we trust or mistrust the world. The next crisis faced is the resolution between autonomy and shame/guilt. Marcia (1993) elaborates on Erikson’s theory:

… one sees that stage specific crises are presented as being in a ‘versus’ relationship. Unfortunately, this description can be misleading about the nature of the resolution of psychosocial crises, and Erikson has repeatedly cautioned against an either-or interpretation. Rather, the resolution of a psychosocial crisis takes the form of predominance by one characteristic over another, especially during pre-identity stages . . . the optimum resolution is a combination of these characteristics tilted toward the positive end …(p. 5).

The development of an individual continues on this trajectory resolving these crises and refining the sense of self; however, Erikson also believes that this core sense of self that is created through the resolution of these crises is not evident until adolescence.

It is only during adolescence that the individual must resolve identity versus identity confusion. By resolving this crisis, Erikson believes that the individual integrates previous crises into a coherent sense of self. This core sense of self as defined by the ego identity shapes how adolescents enter into
adulthood, relate with others, determine occupational choice, and address questions related to intimacy. Marcia (1993) continues describing the core sense of self evident in identity:

The experience of having an identity is that one has a core, a center that is oneself, to which experience and action can be referred. One can trace one’s history in a meaningful way to one’s present situation and can extend that line into probable futures. Individuals with either a conferred or a constructed identity have this sense of inner coherence. However, individuals who construct their identity, modifying or rejecting some conferred elements, also possess a sense of having participated in a self-initiated and self-directed process. They know not only who they are, they know how they became that, and that they had a hand in the becoming. Furthermore, they have developed skills useful in the adaptive process of further self-construction and self-definition (p. 8).

Thus, Erikson’s notion of identity rests upon the ability that we have a core sense of who we are. By working through the crises that Erikson poses, the child integrates those resolutions into a coherence that emerges during adolescence. The construction of identity allows us to develop skills that promote agency, reflection, and self-determination (Kaplan & Maehr, 2002).

Marcia’s work extends Erikson’s theoretical construct to describe the process that takes place as one resolves the crisis between identity achievement and identity confusion. The results of his interviews and research claims that the resolution of identity rests upon the ability to explore different alternatives and arrive at a commitment. The negotiation between exploration and commitment is resolved in one of four statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and
achievement. Comparing the extent to which the individual is actively exploring the identity status in comparison with how committed the individual is to that identity allows for the determination of the status (Marcia, 1966).

With diffusion, the individual is not exploring and not committed. The result is that identity as a potential conflict is not seen. Remaining oblivious to the potential that a conflict may be present is characteristic of someone who is experiencing diffusion as the status. With someone who has a foreclosed identity status, the individual is not exploring but has committed to an identity. In this instance, the individual did not explore and evaluate alternatives before arriving at the commitment of the identity. An example may be that an adolescent sees that all of his family members, many neighbors, and friends work in a factory. This particular teenage boy decides that he should also work in a factory without ever considering any other alternative career options. The result is that the career path is decided and he has committed to this decision without exploring and reflecting on other possibilities.

Moratorium combines the efforts toward both exploration and commitment. The status is both a process of identity exploration and an end in itself. When characterized by moratorium, the adolescent is actively exploring options. The process of exploration can be an unsettling experience for the individual. For some people, it may be the first time that this type of engagement with critical thinking about choices, values, and beliefs takes place. Being in a state of
questioning without having commitments can often be scary, intimidating, or exhilarating.

The final status of Marcia’s identity theory is achievement. The individual who has achieved an identity status has explored alternatives and committed to that aspect of the identity. Through exploration, the identity status was questioned such that options were considered and the best possible option selected. As adolescents mature and encounter different aspects of identity, they may experience cycles whereby they go through moratorium followed by achievement only to be repeated again by moratorium and achievement. Marcia (1980) refers to these as “Mama” cycles. Within the context of the identity status model, identity is conceptualized as both a process and a product.

The exploration indicates the process by which different aspects of identity are considered. The product relates to the commitment that is achieved. The dynamic nature of exploration and commitment allows individuals to consider identity status in different areas. Marcia (1980) states, “A well-developed identity structure, like a well developed superego, is flexible. It is open to changes in society and to changes in relationships. This openness assures numerous reorganizations of identity contents throughout the identity achieved person’s life, although the essential identity process remains the same, growing stronger through each crisis” (p. 160).
Although the core identity may remain stable, there are different contextual situations that may cause the exploration and commitment process to be recapitulated. The recapitulation of the identity status with regard to different aspects of identity and in different historical and social influences does not necessitate identity confusion or a lack of identity. Rather, Marcia describes this as a healthy process that facilitates reflection and renegotiation in response to new situations and demands.

The process of identity construction/development as articulated by Erikson and Marcia becomes the primary foundation identity-related theories and research. Erikson and Marcia primarily consider identity as an individual process and do not investigate the social aspects that frame identity. While their work acknowledges that social processes interplay with identity development, they do not investigate these social processes as an integral aspect of identity development. Although Erikson recognized that social, historical, and cultural trends and events may influence identity development, Marcia’s research primarily considers identity as an intra-psychic developmental process (Erikson, 1968, Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Other research explores what identity means in context. How does the social world influence the individual nature of identity? To answer this question I examined notions of social identity and, in particular, ethnic identity.
Social and Ethnic Identity

Jean Phinney’s research regarding ethnic identity builds from the framework developed by Erikson and Marcia. In discussing the need for research that considers ethnic identity, Phinney (1990) references Erikson stating:

But identity development is not entirely an individual process; an achieved identity is the product of one’s personal history but also one’s place in history (Erikson, 1975). “True identity depends on the support which the young receive from the collective sense of identity which social groups assign to [them]: [their] class, [their] nationality, [their] culture” (Erikson, 1964, p. 93) (p. 171).

Recognizing that we are not alone in our world and that we belong to groups is also an aspect of identity. Defining self in relation to others based on similarities and differences forms our social identity. “Social identity, according to Tajel (1981) is ‘that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives form his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that group membership’” (Phinney, 1990, p. 172).

Phinney (1990, 1992) extends this notion of social membership to look more specifically at the notion of ethnicity as a component of social identity. Phinney’s (1990, 1992) work extends previous research by looking across ethnic groups instead of focusing on one specific group. Phinney’s (1990, 1992) studies look at the ethnic identity process as it pertains to Asian Americans,
Blacks, Mexican-Americans, and Whites. Within the process of ethnic identity, Phinney theorizes that individuals experience a similar process to what Marcia articulates with identity status. For example:

Cross (1978) outlined a model of change among Black youth, from an initial stage (‘pre-encounter’) characterized by a negative view of one’s own group membership, through a process of search or ‘immersion’ in one’s culture, leading to a clear, confident internalization of one’s racial identity, that is an achieved ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992, p. 273).

This developmental process parallels Marcia’s identity statuses; however Cross’ description of racial development is complicated by social, political, legal, and economic inequality that may influence how group membership is perceived by self and others.

The resulting research indicates that the connection between self-esteem ethnic identity achievement is unclear. As Phinney (1992) indicates, lower levels of racial identity have been associated with lower self-esteem and individuals with a more achieved ethnic identity status is related to self-reflective capability and self-esteem (p. 274). The direction of causality has not yet been determined. Does self-esteem promote ethnic identity development or does a positive ethnic identity enhance self-esteem? This question needs to be explored by further research. Additionally, thinking of ethnicity as a universal category is difficult. Just because someone identifies in some way as Asian American does not reduce the diversity found within this construct. An individual with a Japanese
heritage would have significant cultural differences from a person who has a Korean or Chinese background. Feelings of being part of an “Asian” community may have a different impact than if the person is in a community with other Japanese-Americans.

Regardless of the direction of causality, Phinney’s work establishes that ethnic identity is an important aspect of ego identity (Phinney, 1990). Within her 1992 study, Phinney conducted longitudinal research following the participants from the 1990 study. Her goal was to see how ethnic identity progressed during this time. While the sample size decreased from 64 to 18 participants, the follow-up study indicated that identity exploration and achievement was experienced by all but one participant in the study. The small sample size indicates the preliminary nature of these findings, however. Yet the progression is a function that with time and new experiences, ethnic identity exploration and achievement follows similar patterns to ego identity.

While Phinney’s work asked participants to evaluate the relative importance of ethnic identity in comparison to occupational, religious, sex role, and political identities, Deaux’s (1993, 1994) work considers how an ethnic identity is influenced by a change in physical and social context. Additionally, Deaux (1993) elaborates by drawing a distinction between personal and social identities:

Social identities are those roles or membership categories that a person claims as representative. Here I make no distinction
between a group such as Asian-Americans and a role such as mother. Personal identity refers to those traits and behaviors that the person finds self-descriptive, characteristics that are typically linked to one or more of the identity categories . . . these two types of identity are linked to each other . . . each is necessary to give the other meaning (p. 6).

Similar to Erikson’s notion of a core identity referenced previously, Deaux demonstrates how social and personal identities share commonality. With the onset of adolescence, we start to develop an awareness of these aspects of identity and consider them in reference to each other. Often times, awareness is contingent upon contextual factors. Our social and physical environments may spark stimuli or threats that make some aspects of our identities more or less salient.

This concept of identity salience becomes a critical aspect of Deaux’s (1993, 1994) work. Salience as a construct rests upon awareness and importance. Thus an aspect of personal or social identity may become more or less salient depending upon the context. Ethier and Deaux (1994) highlight three contextual models where salience may be present: consistent and persistent association, minority position, and amount of change.

The first situation is when individuals have consistent and persistent association with their group identity. The result is that there is a high level of association with group identity and thus it is typically salient in most situations. The second takes place when one’s status is in a minority position within a group
context. Being in a minority status increases awareness of that aspect of identity and creates a lens for perception. The third aspect of salience is related to the amount of change in context. So for example, if a U.S. citizen travels abroad to France, the amount of change within contexts makes citizenship and nationality a more salient aspect of identity.

Ethier and Deaux (1994) are interested in how contextual factors affect the identity salience in the presence of perceived threat:

Thus in a new context, maintaining a social identity must include a process of re-mooring the identity to new social supports. Specifically, we hypothesize that to successfully maintain an identity in a new environment, a person must develop new bases for supporting that identity and, in the process, detach the identity from its supports in the former environment (p. 244).

Their work involving Hispanic students who transition from home to an elite Ivy League university shows two different processes that take place as the students renegotiate their social and personal identities. For the students who have a high sense of ethnic identity, they continue to strengthen this identity by getting involved with Hispanic organizations and similar students on campus. When the students experienced a weaker ethnic background, they demonstrated greater levels of stress and lower self-esteem in the new environment.

Deaux (1993) elaborates on the relationship between experienced threats to identity and the association with that identity. As threats are experienced, the association with the aspect of identity that is being threatened is weakened. So if
a student believes that his Hispanic background is not valued, then the association with that aspect of identity is weakened. The weakening of this identity could simply be a temporary shift due to context or it could be replaced by a more salient aspect of identity that could be valued more in the next context. In this particular example at a university, the student identity may gain higher status and thus overshadow the Hispanic aspect of identity.

While Ethier and Deaux (1994) do not discuss their findings in terms of Marcia's theory of identity status, it seems as though there is a theoretical similarity between the two. Ethier and Deaux (1994) posit that when the Hispanic students who have lower identity salience do not associate themselves with other Hispanic students, it may be that in fact they are foreclosed on this aspect of their ethnic identity. Perhaps that student grew up in an environment surrounded by Caucasian, Anglo Americans. In the family, Spanish was not spoken and it was more important for the individual to adopt a less salient Hispanic ethnic identity. Foreclosed to exploring this aspect of ethnic identity, it was not until the context changed and identity became more salient that sparked the transition into moratorium for this student. For the students who experienced high identity salience, they had achieved their ethnic identity previously and so it continued to be a strong aspect of their sense of self.

Phinney, Ethier, and Deaux extend Erikson and Marcia's theoretical and empirical research by allowing us to consider both the individual and group
associations as part of identity development and construction. Phinney elaborates on this idea further calling attention to the conflict that may be present when a person finds associations of two conflicting groups. She writes:

Black youths in some settings are faced with the burden of rejecting mainstream values or being accused of denying or betraying their ethnicity by “acting White” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1987). Becoming a member of the middle class in America similarly presents minorities with a conflict between their class and ethnic identities (Steele, 1988) (Phinney, 1993, 51).

The resolution among competing identities is difficult for children, adolescents, and adults to resolve.

In her work with young children, Phinney found that minority youth aligned “American” with “White”. The minority youth implied that the child who articulated this distinction was not American. The reliance on concrete, observable facts makes it difficult for a child to reconcile the conflict found in the abstract notion of identity and group membership. As children move to adolescence, it is easier for them to reconcile their status as members of multiple groups. However, the distinction among multiple identities is still confusing.

In Phinney’s (1993) work with Mexican American high school students, interviews illustrate how some are wrestling with these conflicting notions of identity while others have integrated the different aspects into a synthesized whole. One participant discussed how he felt like he was between two worlds because he listened to American music, but enjoyed eating Mexican food.
Another participant in the study shows the resolution of having two different social identities: “I am a new race, bilingual, which is a mixture of the two countries. I am the new generation, … a different race which knows about both cultures, Mexican and American” (Phinney, 1993, p. 55). The process of recognizing, articulating, and reconciling identity of multiple aspects of self is a difficult process.

Possible Selves

Envisioning the possible self is another dimension related to identity and self-regulation that is relevant to this discussion. Originally proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986), the possible self pertains to how individuals imagine their future. The possible self can either be the feared self or the idealized self (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). Although Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) identify that the possible self does not necessarily mediate behavior, they did identify the possible self as a part of the self-system and is particularly influenced by relationships with others. The envisioned self and its relationship with others influence behavior. Possible selves “provide an image of the self as accepted or rejected by other people” (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006, p. 1690). While the possible self may not promote us to engage in behaviors relative to a specific task or goal, the vision of the future ideal self may support our relationships and encourage us to create and preserve social networks that celebrate and nourish this future vision of the self.
This finding becomes particularly relevant when considering how identity is negotiated within social contexts. For a possible self to flourish, the individual needs to think of what behaviors will support the relationships that enable this possible self to be achieved. Feedback from social interaction with those who share similar possible selves becomes a necessary component to working toward this aspired self. The identity continues to develop as an aspect of the self system through the negotiation of awareness and of internalizing the self from subject to object. Kegan’s theory elaborates upon this perspective.

Constructive-developmental Theory

Robert Kegan differs from other theorists in developing the constructive-developmental approach to identity (Kroger, 2004). Kegan posits that within constructive-developmental theory, the individual makes meaning and through this process, identity is discovered and understood.

Identity formation (or meaning-making) is an ongoing process in which the boundaries between self and other become structured, lost, and reformed. The activity of meaning-making, of organizing and making sense of the world, and then losing that coherence and sense of self to a newly emerging way of being and making sense are the foundations of the constructive-developmental approach…(Kroger, 2004, p. 159).

Kegan bases his work on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg. His theories discuss how identity is constructed in a process that involves knowing the self and knowing other/object.
For Kegan, the self is internal. The self defines how the world is known and understood. It is the capacities of the self that allow meaning-making to occur. The following illustrates Kegan’s meaning: “‘Self’ (or subject) to Kegan refers to that intrapsychic framework in which one is embedded and from which one is unable to create distance; it is not possible to have or to be aware of one’s framework when embedded in it” (Kroger, 2004, p. 159-160). The self becomes the primary mechanism from which we embed knowledge and understanding. It is from the perspective of the “self” that the “other/object” can be seen.

The other or object is an internalized representation of something that we can be aware of external to the self. It is when the self/subject develops an awareness of the other/object that development takes place. At times, this awareness of the object is gradual and at other times distinct. Regardless of the nature of the awareness, the process of recognizing object/other characterizes development. The following description illuminates this definition:

The term object means literally ‘thrown away from’; for Kegan, identity or meaning-making is about the way in which we come to ‘throw away’ something that once was a part of the self and make it an object to a new restructured self so that what we once were we now have. Subject (self) and object (other) are in an ongoing process of change that may continue over the course of the lifespan (Kroger, 2004, p. 160).

Kegan describes the self as incomplete, and this sense of incompleteness drives development. The ever-present imbalance between self/subject and other/object drives the individual to attain balance. The process of recognizing imbalance
characterizes development and shapes identity via meaning-making (Kroger, 2004).

Kegan outlines the constructivist-developmental approach as taking place in five stages or “orders of consciousness” (Kroger, 2004). The consciousness refers to an awareness of one or a group of objects that through interpretation and experience are internalized and result in identity development. Kegan has only placed age parameters with the first two stages. The other stages can be experienced at any point in life and are not age specific. The first stage highlights how the imbalance between subject/object begins.

Stage 0 is also known as “the growth and loss of the incorporative self” (Kroger, 2004, p. 166). During this stage, the infant is born as subject and only knows the self. During this stage, the infant develops to one that “has” rather than “is” its reflexes. This stage takes place from birth to about age two.

The next stage, “the growth and loss of the impulsive balance” is the next “order of consciousness” (Kroger, 2004, p. 166). During this stage, the child develops the capacity to recognize that there is a distinction between the self and the environment. However, the child’s perspective is still limited. Only one perspective of the world is able to be maintained and so it is believed this perception is universally shared by all. This stage is typically experienced by children between age two to five (Kroger, 2004).
“Growth and loss of the imperial balance” is the “second order of consciousness” (Kroger, 2004, p. 168). During this time, one does experience agency and realizes that others have perspectives that may differ from the self. However, “now one’s own needs, interests and wishes are the self” (Kroger, 2004, p. 168). During this stage, a person does not have the implicit capacity to take into consideration the needs, interests, and wishes of others.

The “third order of consciousness,” also known as “the growth and loss of the interpersonal balance,” is characterized by recognition between defining oneself according to needs and having needs (Kroger, 2004, p. 169). This distinguishing feature allows one to recognize the needs of others. The capacity for reciprocity in friendship defines this stage. The individual is defined by personal interrelationships. The social context becomes pivotal for defining the self (Kroger, 2004, p. 170).

Moving from definition of self through relationships with others, the fourth order of consciousness is called “growth and loss of the institutional balance” (Kroger, 2004, p. 170). During this phase of development, the capacity for “self-authorship” develops (Kroger, 2004, p. 170). Organizational and other affiliations characterize the self: “[O]ne is one’s career, citizenship, religion. There is no broader or more encompassing framework within which to relativize one’s organizational commitments, no self to organize its organizations” (Kroger, 2004, p. 172).
The final order of consciousness is called, “the growth of the interindividual balance” (Kroger, 2004, p. 172). The self sees organizational affiliations as characteristic of but not an essential and defining aspect of self. One “has” organizational affiliations rather than “is” organizational affiliations (Kroger, 2004, p. 172). Organizations are recognized for their potential to further an individual’s aims in life. These types of affiliations are seen in conjunction with other aspects of the “self” (Kroger, 2004, p. 172-173).

For Kegan, the negotiation between what is lost and what is gained is both a process of making meaning of the self as subject vs. object as well as a development of consciousness. When the self is seen as the subject, then the interpretation derives from more of a passive orientation. The self is a collection of characteristics or experiences when seen as the subject. However, when seen as the object, the self has agency. These characteristics can be manipulated, controlled, and acted upon. The shift from subject to object leads to development of agency, and consciousness ensues (Pizzaloto, 2006). Jones and McEwen provide a framework that allows for an understanding of how multiple aspects of the self can be interpreted as “other” and thus enacted upon. Jones and McEwen (2000) provide a model that helps conceptualize how we are cognizant of and recognize multiple aspects of identity. Their model draws upon a sense of core identity based on Kegan’s model of constructivist-developmental theory. They also rely upon the notion of identity salience as a
mediating factor that allows for a dynamic and shifting sense of identity hierarchies that may be in play, depending upon contextual influences. Within this model, there is a core sense of self that is surrounded by social/personal identities. The concentric circles demonstrate the dynamic nature of identity and how context may make some aspects more salient than others. Identity is influenced by social and historical context as exhibited by the outer circle (see Chapter 1, figure 3).

Jones and McEwen’s (2000) model captures the complexity and dynamic nature of identity not previously described by other theories and models. It provides a conceptual framework that emerges from Kegan’s thinking regarding how meaning-making relates to identity. Jones and McEwen’s model demonstrates the relative influence of context on defining the self. As a developmental moment, adolescence becomes a critical period to better understand identity development. The psychological changes that are experienced during this time are often a result of negotiating the shift from subject to object as well as maneuvering the multiple competing demands expected by different social groups.

*Adolescent Development*

Adolescence is characterized by most researchers and scholars as the time between childhood and adulthood. It is a developmental period that is defined by change. Adolescents experience a range of biological and
psychological changes that influence their sense of self as well as how they relate with others (Arnett, 2004).

G. Stanley Hall, a pioneer in adolescent development, characterized adolescence as a period of “storm and stress” (Arnett, 2004, p. 12-13). While Hall’s thoughts regarding adolescence have been debated over the years, contemporary researchers do believe that this characteristic of “storm and stress” does describe adolescence “at least for adolescents in the middle-class American majority culture” (Arnett, 2004, p. 13). Despite the agreement of this general characterization, there has been disagreement about the general parameters pertaining to when adolescence ends. Recent research extends adolescence to age 25 with the development of “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2004). Exploring some historical trends pertaining to the study and recognition of adolescence as a maturational period provides insight as to how this developmental period has been characterized.

*Historical Trends of Adolescence*

Arnett (2004) terms 1890-1920 as the “age of adolescence” (p. 9). It is within this stretch of 30 years when the definition of adolescence originated. The end of the 19th century brought reforms in working conditions, education, and the expansion of urban areas. Regulations pertaining to youth accompanied these changes. Young men and young women who were not married were encouraged to enter apprenticeships or work toward getting married and
becoming “adults” (Finkelstein, 2001). Adolescence became to be seen as the
time in life “between irresponsible childhood and married adulthood” (Finkelstein,
2001, p. 3).

As adolescents wrestle with the transition between childhood and
adulthood, they negotiate who they are in relationship to others’ values and
expectations. Often times, an emphasis on peer relationships takes place in
conjunction with the rejection of adult values. However, this is not always the
case, and there are times when youth actually perpetuate “adult” values
(Finkelstein, 2001). The simultaneous process of self-identification and peer
group identification becomes instrumental as adolescents define themselves,
what they believe, and what they hope to become as they transition to adulthood.
Kroger (2004) elaborates on the need to search for self in the following:

Cushman (1990) further suggests that at least in the United States
absence of sense of community, tradition, and shared meaning has
created the conditions for an ‘empty self’; a sense of ‘I’ which
experiences chronic emotional hunger for adolescents and adults alike” (p. 3).

Filling the empty self is a contemporary notion that characterizes adolescent
development. Consumer behavior and ever-expanding media inform how we
see the “self” and try to fill the “empty self” (Kroger, 2004).

While constructing an identity within this tumultuous developmental period
offers its challenges, self-regulation provides a means by which adolescents can
begin to think about how to achieve their goals within this time of transition. Self-
regulation also offers another developmental milestone that defines adolescence (Zimmerman, 2001).

**Self-regulated learning**

Self-regulated learning is a theoretical construct that explains how individuals develop learning skills in the face of changing circumstances. Self-regulated learning provides the learner with feedback to regulate goals and improve performance. Eventually, it is possible for a learner to develop self-regulated learning to function autonomously and adapt to a variety of situations (Zimmerman, 2000). Our contemporary lives demand that we are able to work independently and function without much supervision yet yield high levels of productivity. Teaching children and adolescents how to be self-regulated learners helps them to adapt throughout their lifetime (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-regulated learning takes place in a three phase process: forethought, performance and reflection.

Forethought is the phase in which goals and strategies are articulated. A common question that could characterize this phase is the following: What am I trying to accomplish? Zimmerman (2000) describes forethought as being informed by two sub-processes, task analysis and self-motivating beliefs. Task analysis allows the learner to think about the specific steps involved in accomplishing the goal as well as what strategies are available to help solve this goal. Self-motivating beliefs encapsulate if the learner thinks that the goal is
something that can be accomplished and is worth accomplishing. Zimmerman (2000) describes self-motivating beliefs as being informed by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, intrinsic interest, and goal orientation. These four information sources pertain to the learner’s beliefs in the ability to accomplish a goal. Related to this is an orientation to the goal. A goal can be seen as either an outcome or a process. Thinking of goals in terms of a process assists a learner in his or her efforts to persist and attempt to achieve increasingly difficult goals (Zimmerman, 2000, 2001).

During the performance phase, the learner engages in behaviors that help to accomplish the goals articulated during the forethought phase. Yet the performance phase is more than simply acting toward those goals. There are also elements of staying on task and monitoring behavior while it is taking place. Performance is also thought of in two sub-processes: self-control and self-observation. Zimmerman (2000) describes self-control processes as “help[ing] learners and performers to focus on the task and optimize their effort” (p. 18). The sub processes that Zimmerman describes all assist the learner in eliminating distractions to help accomplish the desired task. These sub processes include self-instruction, imagery, attention focusing, and task strategies. The second process related to performance is self-observation. Self-observation is the ability of the learner to take note of behavior during the moment. This is guided by self-recording and self-experimentation (Zimmerman, 200).
The third phase of self-regulated learning is the reflective phase. During this phase, the learner considers the goals that were articulated during forethought, the actions engaged during the performance phase, and evaluates these relative to each other. Reflection becomes the mechanism that informs future goals and actions and allows the individual to learn from previous experiences. Zimmerman describes the reflective phase as guided by self-judgment and self-reaction.

Self-judgment is one’s capacity to evaluate performance relative to the goal that is trying to be accomplished. Self-judgment is guided by activities like self-evaluation and causal attribution. Both of these activities allow the learner to think about why performance may have taken place in that manner and to develop reasons for the end results. Some of these may be attributed internally to the self while others may be thought of being caused by external agents or factors. In other words, someone else’s actions (or lack of action) influenced how I behaved.

Self-reaction is how an individual reacts to the judgments of performance. These reactions can manifest themselves in a self-satisfying pattern or an adaptive / defensive pattern. The self-satisfaction pattern results in a pleasing affect and so the learner realizes that similar strategies and goals can be accomplished in the future with similar behavior. Adaptive responses indicate that the behavior is still within the learner’s control, but goals and strategies may
need to be modified for improved performance. Defensive strategies place the blame on other factors or individuals and provide the attribution for a performance that may not necessarily meet the needs of the goal articulated during forethought.

Additionally, Zimmerman (2000) articulates self-regulated learning as taking place in a four level process: observation, emulation, self-control and self-regulation. This developmental process of self-regulation is characterized by an increasing removal of social support and models and the ability of an individual to internalize performance standards and develop ways to meet those standards. With observation, a learner simply watches another person. During the observation process, the learner notices how someone engages in an activity as well as how the model may deal with frustration. This is followed by emulation, where the learner tries what was observed but in a controlled environment. During emulation, the learner receives feedback regarding performance as well. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2002) also demonstrate that the model who is observed also impacts development. In a study involving the acquisition of writing and editing skills, students observed either a coping model, a mastery model, or no model at all. A coping model was not an expert, and participants could discriminate ways in which performance could be improved while observing. This process allowed the participants to refine their own use of the same skill, and the results indicated that observing a coping model led to more
accurate performance than compared to observing a mastery model who made no errors and presented a nearly perfect outcome (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002).

After engaging in this developmental process to acquire self-regulation, the learner is ready to work in a situation where the model and immediate feedback are removed. In this instance, the learner needs to exercise self-control relative to the performance standards. Once the learner has developed this level of self-control and can function independently, then new contexts or transferring these skills to new situations will promote the development of self-regulation.

Additionally, Zimmerman articulates that self-regulation is developed during adolescence and is a milestone that characterizes this developmental period (2001). Adolescents have acquired the cognitive capacity for reflection, advanced planning, and mental representation needed to engage in self-regulation. Children cannot regulate their behaviors, yet we hope that adults have mastered this capability. Adolescence, as a developmental period, is the time to develop these skills that transition one into an autonomous adult.

Zimmerman (2000) cautions that although learners may master self-regulation, they may choose not to engage in the mental demands required of the self-regulated process in all situations. Additionally, someone who is self-regulated and has achieved high proficiency in a skill may continue to wish to
refine this behavior or strategy perhaps to achieve new levels of achievement or if the contextual demands shift and new strategies are required. Getting feedback from others does not involve a regression within the four processes. Rather it is another means to receive feedback relative to forethought and performance.

*Self-regulated learning and theoretical orientations*

Self-regulated learning is a means of learning that transcends theoretical traditions within educational psychology. Behaviorists, cognitive scientists, social cognitive, social constructivist, and phenomenologists have debated how self-regulated learning fits within their theoretical and empirical traditions (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001). The debate how self-regulated learning can be understood and applied from a variety of theoretical orientations in psychology demonstrates that self-regulated learning is an adaptable theory that has explanatory power across a variety of perspectives and situations. In other words, self-regulated learning can explain human behavior and cognition from a variety of perspectives.

Within the context of this research, I draw upon the social constructivist perspective regarding self-regulated learning. Paris, Byrnes, and Paris (2001) discuss how the second wave of constructivist thought situates constructivism within a social and historical context. Whereas previous constructivist thinking focused on an individual constructing knowledge and meaning alone, new wave
constructivism considers how individuals construct knowledge and meaning in the presence of others. They write:

Practices and tools used within communities or schools impact what is available and valuable for students to appropriate. Students acquire the cultural capital of their local groups, which may entail the values and identities associated with sports, music, academic achievement, membership in cliques or gangs, and so on. Each group proscribes specific practices and values that become the behavior that is to be appropriated, that is, imitated, monitored, and regulated in order to have the visible appearance of group membership (Paris, Byrnes, & Paris, 2001, p. 256).

Thus, self-regulation and associated adaptive behavior becomes a form of cultural capital that aids in adjustment to new environmental demands. The learner utilizes the processes in self-regulated learning to identify what a specific group of peers values. This individual can articulate goals, select strategies, monitor performance and reflect on these behaviors to self-regulate and attempt to fit in with the norms and expectations of this social group. Part of this self-regulation process is the ability to identify social norms. The cultural capital acquired through this process allows a learner to develop social savvy that can be used to achieve other goals.

Students who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds have access to different cultural role models. Thus, they have access to observe different types of behavior. One of the questions guiding this research relates to the ability of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds to engage in self-regulated learning behaviors.
When a student comes from a family where neither a mother nor father has a college education, does the student have the opportunity to engage in self-regulated learning activities to become a successful student? If the observing does not originate from parents, then perhaps there is a network of peers or other extended family members who role model what it means to be a successful student.

Regardless of what outcomes are determined within the context of this study, the premise that our social circumstances inform the role models who are available is an important aspect of this research. Self-regulated learning is a form of cultural capital that assists in adjustment. In other words, self-regulated learning is a cultural tool that can be used to adjust to new socially constructed demands. The availability and automaticity of self-regulated learning as a cultural tool seems to be related to one’s familial circumstances.

*Measuring Self-regulated Learning*

While measuring self-regulated learning has been done using both survey research as well as direct observation, the focus of this study used interviews as its primary means to collect data and discuss self-regulation with research participants.

According to Winne and Perry (2000), self-regulated learning has been thought of as either an aptitude or as an event. When measuring self-regulated learning as an aptitude, it is thought of as a generalized collection of a person’s
tendencies to be self-regulated across time and context. There are a variety of measures that have been created to assess self-regulated learning as an ability. These include both survey and interview protocols. In addition, teachers have also been asked to measure a student’s use of self-regulated learning strategies. Teacher evaluations have been used to evaluate self-regulated learning as an aptitude (Winne and Perry, 2000).

In contrast, self-regulated learning as an event is measured in context and measures the use of self-regulated learning during a specific situation. To measure self-regulated learning as an event, the researchers have used think aloud measures, error detection tasks, and trace methods (Winne and Perry, 2000). During a think aloud, a person is asked about how they reacted to a task and what steps they used to work on this task. This type of think aloud task allows metacognitive data to be collected as an event takes place. An error detection task embeds errors into a protocol and allows the researcher to see how a participant deals with a discrepancy (Winne and Perry, 2000, p. 551). “Traces (Winne, 1982) are observable indicators about cognition that students create as they engage with a task” (Winne and Perry, 2000, p. 551). By recording the marks or traces that a student makes, the researcher analyzes the strategy employed.

Lastly, observation techniques have been used to measure self-regulated learning both as an event and as a process. Within these procedures, specific
time periods of a classroom are observed and researchers take records regarding the use of self-regulated tactics. The records are then coded and inter-rater reliability is used to verify findings.

Measuring self-regulated learning is a complex endeavor. Asking questions about why and how self-regulated learning is used involves in-depth investigation and responses. Additionally, exploring how context affects self-regulated learning is essential to this research project. Patrick and Middleton (2002) discuss how they have used in-depth observation and interviews to investigate these very questions relating to self-regulated learning. They write, “From interviews we can appreciate students’ understanding of the task and other requirements, learn the kinds of things they think about during and after engaging in activities, what aspects of the task and context they think encourage and support their persistence and thoughtfulness, and why they do what they do” (Patrick and Middleton, 2002, p. 30).

Patrick and Middleton’s work involving problem-based learning in science classrooms has led to an understanding that students’ responses to surveys may differ from what they actually do in a classroom. They discuss two students whose self-regulated learning scores from surveys differ from their actual classroom behavior. The use of qualitative methods via observation and interview helped them to see inconsistencies that may exist between what survey and classroom-based learning (Patrick and Middleton, 2002). Looking at self-
regulated learning from a variety of perspectives is important and suggests that both observation and other forms of investigation are necessary to gain access to how students make meaning of their use of self-regulated learning skills.

Due to the intentional small sample size of this study, survey methods were not appropriate in this instance. In this research, interviews have been primarily used to attempt to understand self-regulated learning in terms of both ability and within the context of specific events. Additionally, this research is situated in the power of context and contextual change. Discussing the change from high school to college has been an important consideration when thinking about the use of self-regulated learning skills.

Conclusion

While the literature regarding social class, identity, adolescence, and the development of self-regulation as a hallmark during this developmental period contributes to our understanding, there are still gaps that remain in our ability to know the new space that emerges from the intersection of social class, identity, and self-regulation during adolescence. This intersection is a tenuous place that can be just as scary as it is hopeful. Within the intersection of social class, identity, and self-regulation are the constraints and opportunities of where we come from, who we are, and who we hope to be tomorrow. The literature reviewed presents timeless questions regarding agency, social constraints, and
how we negotiate who we are and what we can and cannot do within those
circumstances.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the intersections among
and between social class, identity development, and the use and development of
self-regulated learning strategies. The study took place over one academic year,
beginning in March 2007 and data collection ended in May 2008. The research
project used an emergent design following principles of constructivist grounded
theory (Charmaz, 2000). Specific questions that guided the research included
the following:

How did adolescents from lower socioeconomic means experience the
transition to college?

How did they gain a sense of self that is informed both by their
socioeconomic status, self-regulated learning, and by the new academic
demands of college?

In what ways did the students make meaning of their experiences that
demonstrated the intersection of social class, identity, and self-regulated
learning?

Researcher Subjectivities

One of my primary assumptions was that social class makes a qualitative
difference in lived experiences. Social class was visible by the economic context
of our neighborhoods and whether we decided to get a caffe latte at Starbucks or
McDonald’s. Social class was evident by our material possessions, our occupations, and our taste in food, clothing, and entertainment. Additionally, educational psychology has been challenged to include social class as a context for researching development and learning (Murdock, 2000). Examining the contextual influences of social class with a group of students who have demonstrated academic success was at the heart of this study.

I believed adolescents who came from a working class or poor background have access to fewer resources and faced challenges that students from middle and upper-class backgrounds do not face. To adjust to the demands of college and subsequent careers that demand a college education, those from working class or poor backgrounds needed to re-think their sense of self.

Essentially, I believed that this group of people needed to develop an awareness of the implicit cultural expectations that accompany middle class academic and working environments, while also demonstrating the skills and behaviors that allowed them to “fit” into these new middle-class environments. Just as important to an integrated sense of self, they learned how to code-switch so they could belong in this new world, while simultaneously maintaining a sense of self that allowed them to return to their origins (Ogbu, 1998); (Delpit, 1996). The study described herein began to better understand the start of how social class was integrated into identity and behavior. To engage in this understanding, this research compared and contrasted findings collected from a heterogeneous
group of students who had earned a scholarship based on high academic achievement and financial need.

Research Epistemology

I framed the research from a subjectivist view of the world. The meaning that students ascribed to their social class background as they transitioned to college was a subjective understanding that was bound by social, historical, political, and economic contexts. The meaning that students ascribed to their experiences served as both the data and as level of analysis within this project. Current events, geography, and cultural influences became an integral aspect to why and how students made meaning of their socioeconomic background, their sense of identity, and their development and use of self-regulated learning strategies. The subjective understanding of how we make meaning and understand the world allowed for differing perspectives and multiple truths found in this data.

Trustworthiness

How can we trust what is collected and reported? In their discussion of trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline trustworthy research as that which develops creditability, transferability, confirmability and dependability of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend using the strategies of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation to improve the credibility of the research.
Through prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation, I attempted to produce trustworthy research. I engaged participants for close to 10 months of communication and data collection. Additionally, I worked to use information from each previous interview to build and extend rapport. Triangulation is the ability to look at a source of data from multiple perspectives. Using multiple vantage points to look at something will help to determine the nature of what is being observed or interpreted (Schwandt, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) articulate Denzin’s (1978) four aspects of triangulation: sources, methodological, investigator, and theoretical (p. 305). By collecting written reflections and interview data, I triangulated the sources of data.

One of the limitations and strengths of qualitative research is the reliance on the researcher to interpret data and draw inferences. The researcher’s immersion with the research process and data may make it challenging to recognize faulty assumptions or overlooked trends found in the data. Data memos, consultations with other reviewers, and clarifying initial assumptions with participants all served as part of my reflexivity.

As Lather states, “But if we want illuminating and resonant theory grounded in trustworthy data, we must formulate self-corrective techniques that will check the credibility of our data and minimize the distorting effect of personal bias upon the logic of evidence (Kamarovsky, 1981)” (Lather, 1986, p. 65). Systematic reflexivity is not a confessional and does not absolve me as the
researcher from my biases. The peer reviewers served as an additional means to check my biases as a researcher.

**Dependability**

When data is dependable, then the audience and stakeholders believe the claims of the data. It is dependable in its representation and its findings. Triangulating the data, engaging in the peer review, and producing an audit trail all contribute to the dependability of the findings.

**Confirmability**

To determine if the research findings are confirmable, I created an audit trail (see Appendix B). The audit trail is a means by which the researcher documents analytical decisions and provides the evidence that contributes to those findings. Sharing an audit trail with others assists in making the research more transparent and increases the potential access to the research process.

Building in multiple means of improving the rigor of theoretical development is quintessential within qualitative frameworks. However, despite all the actions that the researcher may take to improve credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability, it is ultimately the consumer of research who determines the value of the research process and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By reading, critiquing, and using the knowledge found in research, consumers demonstrate their trust in these endeavors and warrant a continuation
of these and similar methods. Once the research is seen as trustworthy, then it can provide practical value to stakeholders who may benefit from the work.

Research Design

Sampling

The participants were the most important aspect of learning how socioeconomic background intersected with identity and self-regulated learning. Socioeconomic status became the most important characteristic that shaped the scope of participant recruitment and ultimate selection. As a result, students who earned the Land Grant Opportunity Scholarship (http://www-afa.adm.ohio-state.edu/undergrad/merit.html#landgrant) were recruited to participate in this study.

Receiving the scholarship demonstrated financial need (http://www-afa.adm.ohio-state.edu/undergrad/merit.html#landgrant). This scholarship was given annually to a group of approximately ninety students out of the more than five thousand who enrolled as first year students. Students were eligible for the Land Grant Opportunity Scholarship if their family earned less than $40,000. They kept the scholarship by maintaining a grade point average of a 3.2 or greater. While this financial need did not inherently place all recipients in a working or lower class group, it allowed the research to focus on students who came from less wealthy backgrounds.
The eligibility standards of the scholarship ensured that I would select participants who started their first year of college, had some awareness of their financial standing, were intent on attending and completing their first year of college, and lastly, had earned good grades while in high school.

All students who received the scholarship were invited to participate in the study. Out of the group of 84 contacted to participate, 17 expressed interest. Seven students from this group of 17 returned consent forms to participate in the first interview prior to the start of classes. Within this group of seven, there were six females and one male. All participants were Caucasian except for one African American female and one Latina. Six out of the seven participated in all four interviews.

Melanie was the only participants who did not participate in the final interview. Similar to the other students, I sent Melanie an e-mail at the beginning of Spring Quarter to schedule the interview. I heard from all the other students except for her and so I sent a second e-mail. Another five days went by and I still had not heard anything from Melanie and so I made a third attempt to contact her. Melanie replied and explained that she had some health difficulties, a death in her family, her parents moved to a new town during her Spring Break and she was very busy and stressed with her academic demands. I attempted to see if she might be available for an abbreviated meeting and she did not reply. My final e-mail communication to her thanked her for her participation in the research,
informed her that she was still eligible to receive her gift card that I had originally promised, and I also provided a website address for the Counseling and Consultation office in the event that she needed to speak with someone about how to manage the stress in her life. I also let her know that all students were eligible for ten free meetings with a counselor. Melanie never replied.

The Participants

Before discussing findings, I would like to introduce the participants involved in the research. There were seven first-year college students who participated in the interviews and reflective journaling. They were all from different counties in Ohio. Table 1 provides an introduction to the seven students who participated in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Academic / Career Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Divorced; Father with mental illness</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married; Father with mental illness</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Accounting; switched to Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Non-profit admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Overview of participants
The first column on the left provides the pseudonyms. The next column describes the participant’s gender. All were female with the exception of Ross, the only male. The next column provides information regarding race; all were Caucasian except for Tina, who is African-American, and Carey who is Latina.

The next column provides a brief introduction to the participants’ families. Six of the seven had parents who were divorced. Two participants had parents who suffered from mental health issues and as a result had difficulty maintaining full-time employment for a sustained period of time. With divorce, mental illness, and returning to college for a degree, all of the participants described a time in their families where they survived on one primary income. More than half of the participants were first generation college students.

The last column describes the participants’ academic and career interests. Three of the participants were interested in careers in medicine. One was interested in engineering, one in business, one in law and one in non-profit management.

All participants came from across the state of Ohio, mainly growing up in rural and suburban communities. None of them came from an urban community. They were also an academically accomplished group.

In addition to receiving the scholarship, three participants mentioned being a valedictorian as one of their proudest accomplishments and a fourth was
eligible to be valedictorian, but did not pursue the application process used at her high school to determine this accolade.

Data Collection

Interview and written reflection were the primary source of data. Data was collected at four critical time points during the first year of college. The first interview was conducted either in the days before they arrived on campus or while students were on campus, but prior to the start of college classes. The subsequent three interviews were conducted at the mid-point of each academic term (Autumn, Winter, Spring Quarters). The mid-point was chosen because it provided the students with an opportunity to receive graded feedback in their academic courses. Receiving feedback was an integral aspect to reflection and performance as witnessed in self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2000).

Additionally, students were asked to provide written reflection to structured prompts either prior to or following the interviews. Participants varied on how often they replied to written reflections. Due to the inconsistency with the data collection of the written reflections and the voluminous amount of data already collected from the interviews, they were not included in the scope of this project.

Interview

“An interview, as Dexter (1970) has suggested, is a conversation with a purpose” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of these conversations was to gain a sense of how the participants make sense of social class in addition to
how this understanding informed their identity during the transition to college. As themes and patterns emerged from interviews, active reflection became necessary to analyze the assumptions that undergird both their responses as well as the silences present from both me and them.

The first interview was designed to learn about the student’s high school and family experiences. The goal of this interview was to build trust and develop initial rapport. The goal of the second interview was to investigate their sense of social class. The third interview focused on academic experiences and self-regulated learning and the fourth interview was an opportunity to synthesize previous interviews and integrate awareness of social class with academic experiences and lastly to gain a general sense of the transition to college. (See Appendix B for interview protocols).

During the third and fourth interviews, participants were provided instructions regarding how to download and send me their unofficial academic transcripts. This academic transcript documented any transfer credits the students had, their prior quarter courses and grades, their overall grade point average, and their current academic schedule. The transcript provided a means for the participants to talk about the grades they received, the effort they put forth in their courses, and what they had learned from those courses. This became a spring board for participants to articulate specific strategies that developed based on their academic performance.
During the fourth interview, I presented the participants with a table that provided a description of the upper class, middle class, working class, and working poor were described using income, occupation, level of education, housing, health care, ability to afford children’s college education, neighborhood, and political power (Woolfolk, 2007). Participants used the table to identify the social class of their family. The table gave the participants an opportunity to use a common reference point when thinking and talking about their own social class backgrounds (to see a copy of this table, please see Appendix B).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the project and involved the creation of data tables, data memos, open coding, axial coding and writing as a means of analysis. The analysis began as participant profiles were created following each interview. This data table of participant profiles summarized the interview for each participant and allowed me to identify salient aspects discussed during the interview. In addition, data memos were created that documented my reflections following each interview. The data table and memos were consulted prior to the subsequent interview and allowed me to decide if there were individual or systematic topics that I needed to ask the participants.

Open Coding

To analyze the data while also maintaining the integrity of the data for each participant and to aid in seeing patterns and themes related to identity, I
conducted a systematic case by case analysis following completion of all data collection. Within this systematic analysis, three a priori passes were made through the transcripts. Specifically, I printed three sets of transcripts for each participant. With the first set, I made a pass looking for any piece of data that related to social class. Within the second set of transcripts, I coded data related to self-regulated learning, and the third set I coded data related to identity. As I made the social class pass through the data, the following questions guided my analysis:

Where was social class evident in the data?

Why was this piece of data related to social class?

What was the most relevant code that distinguished this chunk of data from other pieces related to social class?

By considering these three primary questions, my goal in coding was parsimony. In other words, I was identifying pieces of data that could be interpreted as distinct from other pieces of data. The data and related code could stand on its own.

I conducted the pass for self-regulated learning very similarly to social class. The questions that guided that analysis included:

Where was self-regulated learning evident?

How did this piece of data fit (or not fit) with the three phases of Zimmerman’s model of self-regulated learning (forethought, performance, or reflection)?
Where was self-regulated learning absent? In other words, through this piece of data, were there developmental gaps evident related to acquiring self-regulated learning strategies and behaviors?

Two types of analyses were conducted when making a priori passes coding data related to identity. The first pass focused on how the participant described identity. While coding the data for identity, the following questions guided the analysis:

- How was the participant describing him/her self in terms of who they were in that moment?
- What types of things did the participant say that described priorities, values, and behaviors that evidenced their conceptions of who they were?
- What aspects of the participants’ lives contributed to how they made meaning of their identity?

The other focus that pertained to identity related to Kegan’s theory of identity development. To focus the analysis, I coded transcripts by considering Kegan’s theory of consciousness and how identity was constructed through loss and gain. Additionally, I created a table for all participants that provided a description of each phase of consciousness, how that phase related to one’s social class identity, and included excerpts of data that aligned with that particular phase of consciousness (see Chapter 4, Table 2 for an example).

*Axial Coding*

Axial coding began to integrate the parsimonious codes allowing for themes to emerge from the data. While Glaser & Strauss (1999) and Strauss &
Corbin (1990) discuss how the researcher identifies codes and categories found within the data to create a theory that is based upon the evidence found in the research, they leave the specific process of identifying these relationships blurry and vague (Wilson Scott, 2004; Boeje, 2002). To begin the process of axial coding that illustrated the patterns found both within and across participants and the three a priori data passes, I created a table following each a priori pass that allowed me to conduct axial coding within and across the data. The summaries in the table began the initial process of seeing patterns emerge both within and across a priori themes and participants. I also wrote data memos that summarized what was found as a result of that particular pass. Using the data table, themes were identified that would build upon the previously created coding schemes.

With the table created that summarized each a priori pass through the data, I then used index cards to continue to identify the themes that cut across and within participants and a priori data passes. Ryan & Bernard (2000) illustrated the varied ways that qualitative researchers organize data into meaningful relationships. One example described is the pile sort (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Index cards allowed me to perform a similar analytic.

Similar to the previous passes, it was important to continue to maintain the integrity of the data within each participant. The interview transcripts were printed on labels and each label was adhered to an index card. Every card was
numbered and identified by the line numbers from the transcript. The data code was written on the other side of the card. Cards were organized by themes that were previously identified from the data table that had been created after the initial passes through the transcripts.

The original codes from the first a priori passes were referenced from transcripts. Codes were refined to ensure that the data provided evidence of this code. Through the process of creating index cards, some codes were collapsed into others. Additionally, as the passes were made for each a priori theme, when data intersected with another a priori topic then a new index card was created for that piece of data. For example, if the data was an intersection of social class, self-regulated learning and identity, then three new cards were created. The first card was for the intersection found between social class and self-regulated learning. The second card was for the intersection between social class and identity and the third card was created for the intersection of all three topics. Each card was labeled with a reference number as well as the line number from the original transcript. On the side of the index card that was not labeled, I wrote the code that pertained to the respective topics. If there was one intersection then a colored sticker was placed on the original index card. A second sticker was placed if there was a second intersection and a third if the data intersected for all three topics. The stickers allowed me to easily identify data that contained the intersections.
Unlike the a priori passes, themes were not previously identified for the data that intersected. After all data was coded, intersections were organized according to themes found within the data that intersected across two and three topics respectively.

**Peer Review**

Following the recommendations of Lincoln & Guba (1985) I called upon a group of peers to assist in the analytic process that contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings. The goals of the peer review were to

- Verify coding used in the data analysis
- Identify biases that emerged through data analysis
- Discuss the crisis of representation and conduct a dialogue regarding what stories were imperative to tell from the data

To conduct the peer review, six graduate students were contacted. Each peer reviewer was asked to participate based upon their research experience as well as their familiarity and expertise with the respective a priori topics: social class, identity, and self-regulated learning. The group was divided into teams of two. All six peer reviewers received data from Jamie’s interviews. One participant’s data was used to focus the conversation and discuss the one participant in greater depth. Using data from multiple participants would have introduced the reviewers to the breadth of the data and this could have caused
the process to lose focus (Appendix B contains materials related to the peer review).

Peer reviewers were asked to code the transcript using their own open coding scheme. Following this pass through the transcript, they engaged in comparison between their coding scheme and the codes I had identified. They used the codes developed in my code books, noting any discrepant coding between the codes they used and the codes provided in the code book.

Approximately one week after having an opportunity to code a chunk of data, we met as a group. Four of the six were able to meet. Individual meetings were held with the other two peer reviewers. The peer reviewers responded in writing to three prompts. The first topic pertained to which codes were easy to observe in the data and which codes were more challenging. The second prompt asked the peer reviewers to reflect upon their own biases that may have influenced their coding scheme. And then lastly, I asked the reviewers to consider which story they would share from the data that they coded.

We discussed their responses as a group beginning with the last prompt regarding the story told from the data, followed by the prompt regarding their biases, and ending with the prompt related to data codes. The session with the peer reviewers affirmed the codes that I had identified as they pertained to self-reliance, task analysis, and career-related goals and identity. The reviewers also discussed a topic that was not adopted as part of this analysis. They
questioned this particular participant’s ability to form trusting relationships with others. While this was a fascinating topic, it was outside the scope of this particular project.

Engagement in a peer review process was a “self-corrective process” to check the findings, my assumptions, and gain others’ thoughts regarding how the data should be represented (Lather, 1986). Systematic reflexivity was not a confessional and I was not absolved from my researcher biases. However, asking a group of peers to openly challenge my assumptions was an attempt to de-center me as the singular voice of authority. While my voice and interpretive lens primarily shaped the analysis and representation of the data, others’ perspectives contributed to the findings.

*Writing as analysis*

The final analytic technique employed was writing. I engaged in the process that Richardson so eloquently and persuasively recommends (2000). In the process of writing the findings, I found the umbrella theme within the data. I had written for pages and pages and noticed the repetition in my writing. By reading this repetition in my writing, and reflecting upon my initial interpretations of interviews, I recognized the umbrella theme of determination and self-reliance.

Even though determination was “everywhere” in the transcripts, it initially evaded me as the umbrella theme. Until I was faced to see my own biases
through the repetition in my writing, I could not see this umbrella theme. I had been biased by my own experiences of living in a privileged social class, my knowledge from literature, and a belief that poverty must put someone in a position of disadvantage. Upon closer inspection of the data, it was clear that determination framed how the participants’ saw social class, identity, and self-regulation.

When I write to understand, I need to be repetitive so I can continue to teach myself what I am still trying to learn. When I write to persuade, I have greater clarity and strength in my voice. Holding my own writing to this standard helped me to ascertain when I am writing as part of analysis and when I have a stronger command of the story that I need to tell others.

Identifying determination as an umbrella theme provided a framework to think about the intersections found within social class, identity, and self-regulation. It led to the development of the conceptual model that illustrated how pervasive the umbrella theme was within the data, and lastly, it led me to a new standard in my writing.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the intersections found within social class, identity and self-regulated learning that adolescents experienced during the transition to college. Examining the intersections created new spaces to understand and think about the interrelationship among social class, identity and self-regulation.

In its simplest form, an intersection consists of two points that meet. The complexity of this concept grows when considering that this could involve three, four, five and many more points coming together. New spaces are created at the point of intersection. The new space allows for interaction, creation, conflict, domination, and subordination. Within the intersection, past experiences, present realities, and future hopes coalesce in order to make meaning of both the self (identity) and the world in which we live. The conceptual model described attempts to represent how social class, identity and self-regulation related to each other in this process.
Figure 4 presents a conceptual model that represents the major themes found in the data. Determination framed how the participants made meaning of the world and their identity within that world and is represented by the triangle. Influencing both the inner world (identity) and the social and physical contexts (outer world) were social class and self-regulated learning. The participants’ evolving descriptions of social class and self-regulation indicated the dynamic nature of these two aspects that intersected with identity.

Social class and self-regulated learning are represented by arrows because they influenced both the participants’ internal construction of who they are as well as their views of the outside world. Social class framed the participants’ ability to self-regulate and in turn negotiated their sense of identity (inner world) and their view of the community in which they lived and engaged with others (outer world). Their social class position gave them access to resources that were, in turn, used to self-regulate their learning behaviors, all of which contributed to their ability to negotiate a changing “student” identity, as well as related “career” identities.

For example, the participants’ lower income background limited their access to middle class academic and career role models. Lacking access to role models caused the participants to struggle with the development of a complex
repertoire of self-regulated learning strategies and behaviors. Yet through determination, their lack of role models, and related studying strategies did not deter their belief in their potential to change their social class position.

In Figure 4, social class status and self-regulation intersect as identity is negotiated. In other words, the intersection prompted the worldview of determination; however, their worldview of determination also influenced their sense of identity. Lastly, the participants negotiated meaning between their inner self and the outside world as they became conscious of their volition, their relationships with others, and their institutional affiliations. The participants' most salient aspects of the self became contextualized at first by volition, secondly by relationships with others, and lastly they started to see how institutions played a role in constructing their identity. Consciousness served as a reference point to develop identity, interpret of social class, and engage in the use and development of self-regulation.

The conceptual model provides a way to integrate determination in the context of social class, self-regulation and identity. Whether it was how they discussed their own goals or how they described the relationship between economics and education, determination seemed to frame the way that they made meaning of themselves individually and the world in which they lived. Subsequently, determination became the umbrella theme that framed the findings.
Determination

_Determination as truth, not paradox_

When considering the potential impact of poverty on the ability to earn a college degree, the participants in this study are more than likely to fail rather
than graduate in the next four years (Scott & Leonhard, 2005; Newman, 2007). After analyzing the data, listening to their stories, and considering this grim prediction, I was blinded by the paradoxical circumstances that shaped their goals. I found myself posing hypothetical questions about each participant and imagining their responses:

Why did Ross articulate seeing a cycle that perpetuated poverty, yet believed that social class can be changed if a person wanted to do so? *Because I control my future.*

Despite her recognition that her high school did not prepare her for college, why did Tracy continue to believe that through hard work your economic situation can change? *Because I have done so and I will continue to be successful.*

Why did Tina dare to dream that she could be a doctor when no one in her family has even gone to college before? *Because I am determined to achieve my goals.*

Why did Jamie put forth more effort and use new strategies when she said over and over again that you either know something or you don't? *Because I am determined to achieve my goals.*

Why did Carey dare to dream that she could be either an accountant or a lawyer when no one in her family has gone to college before? *Because I am determined to be successful.*

After growing up in a comfortable middle class family, why did Debbie want to pursue a career in non-profit management? *Because I determine my own happiness. It is not defined by salary alone.*

After living in a family that was sustained by only one income, why did Melanie believe that being poor does not interfere with success? *I have already earned my associate’s degree am determined to go further.*
In each case, they responded with determination. They denied the existence of the perceived paradox that I saw in their lives. They resisted their current social class positions and researchers’ predictions that indicated their destiny was to remain a member of the working class. They challenged me to reconsider my position as the empowered outsider, the omniscient researcher, and pushed me to recognize that through their determination, they can resist the status quo described by statistics. Here I began to see determination as an umbrella theme within the data. However, determination, similar to Bandura’s description of agency, does not come without unintended consequences. Determination without caution can easily lead to obsession and unhealthy levels of stress. Additionally, the participants’ belief in their determination could be a result of their false consciousness.

**Determination as Umbrella Theme**

The dominant intersection of social class identity with academic self-regulation started from their sense of determination and self-reliance at the epicenter. It was through the prism of determination and self-reliance that the participants’ made meaning of their world around them and their own sense of self in that world. Hardly a paradox as I initially interpreted, the participants often resisted defining social class and, when pressed, they would often frame their responses within the possibility that their social class status could change based upon their hard work and determination. The following describes determination
as an umbrella theme and specifically addresses how determination related to social class, identity, and self-regulation

Determination was defined as the belief in self-reliance or will power to accomplish a task or a goal. Determination was a lens to understand social class, a means to describe identity, and a way to discuss self-regulation focusing specifically on goals. An overarching theme that resounded through the data was the sense that it was not income level that defined the participants, but rather their determination or volition.

Volition has been studied in psychology for over 200 years (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Although the motivational and identity literature may differ in their interpretations and definitions of what volition means and the role that it plays in our lives, here the participants discussed volition from both psychological perspectives. Through the lens of motivation, volition was determining their goals, their interests, and the ideal possible life. Kegan also believes that our consciousness of these very goals, ideals, and wishes develops identity.

Regardless of its psychological orientation, determination was the intersection found throughout the data. But what exactly did this intersection look like? To gain a deeper understanding of determination as an intersection it is discussed in relationship to social class, identity, and self-regulation respectively.
Determination and Social Class

Common among all the students was a sense that with determination and hard work, anyone should be able to change her or his social class status. When asked if they thought there was a connection between education and social class, all of them said no. Their rationale rested in their belief that hard work and determination were greater than income. My conversation with Melanie provided greater insight into the belief that the participants have about determination being more powerful than income.

Ryan: Do you think that the rich, middle class or poor makes a difference in how well you do in school?

Melanie: I know statistics say yes, but I really don’t think it is. I think if people are letting it make a difference in how you do in school, like using it as a crutch. But basically, I think it comes down to how bad you want something and how much effort you are willing to put into it.

Ryan: So how do you think the statistics are wrong?

Melanie: Well, I mean, the statistics will say, like if you, X amount of people from a poor area or lower middle class will not get their degree, well yes that would be the case, but I don’t think it necessarily has to deal with strictly because of the monetary aspects. I think it also depends on their environment more so, and if their parents don’t realize the importance of going off to school and getting higher education, then they won’t feel the need to go. But if their parents got their education later on and realized what a difference it makes and they are still in that bracket, then they will stress it to their children as well.
To Melanie, poverty was not a barrier, but rather an excuse for not being more successful. Recognizing the potential income that could come from a college education should spark the determination to work towards that goal. For Melanie, this determination was enough to change your economic status.

Tracy also discussed how she thought the poor in her community could change their economic situation if only they were willing to work harder. Similar to Melanie, she thought that assistance from the government served as a crutch and maintained poverty. If they worked harder, then the poor would not have to stay poor.

Tracy: I think that a lot of poor community live on welfare more than anything and I think that is almost a bad thing, because like I know a lot of people where I come from that don’t have money and are living off the government, like they just don’t work. They don’t even try, and that makes me mad. I never did get that.

Ryan: Why does it make you mad?

Tracy: Because, it is like, they always complain about never having any money, and living off their poor income, when it wouldn’t be that hard for them to move up in the world, but they just don’t, they want to live off the government. They don’t want to work.

Ryan: So it sounds like you think people have control over what social class they find themselves in.

Tracy: I agree. They definitely have control over where they want to be.
The participants believed that it is our capacity to work hard that ultimately leads to wealth and success. In the following passage Carey articulated this belief and how it was even more important for the middle class or poor to work hard. She thought that the rich did not have as much to lose and so they may not invest as much in their education.

Ryan: Do you think that being rich or poor or middle class makes a difference with how well you do in school?

Carey: No. Well, I think the level of determination, do what you need to do to get by, but I think maybe, well if you see rich celebrities who have gone to school, okay like the Olson twins, I don’t know how focused they were because what is it to them? Whereas, people who actually pay to go to college take it seriously. They see it as a value, like a money value and the pay you can get back, where rich people don’t really think twice about it. It is just another amount to them. Something to do with their money. The harder you have to work to get there, the harder you probably work at it, lower and middle class wise.

Melanie, Tracy, and Carey voiced how they made sense of the world. The excerpts from their interviews demonstrated that they believed hard work can be more powerful than any advantage given by wealth alone. Yet this sense of determination extended beyond how the participants make sense of the world around them. It also related to their sense of self and achievement.

**Determination and Identity**

With social class, the participants described how determination was the catalyst to rise above economic position. In terms of identity, determination
fueled the participants’ belief that they would be successful. Evidence from Tina’s interview allows us to see the relationship between determination and identity.

Being rich or poor has nothing to do with your intelligence, really, I mean if you are smart, you’re smart. You can go to school if you want to go to school. I know my family is not well off financially, but I mean, look at me, here at Ohio State, you know? I do good so I can go to school, and I don’t have to worry about it. I don’t think it matters, as long as you are determined. (Tina, interview 2).

By being a determined person, Tina met her educational goal to pay for college. Here Tina discussed determination as a core component to whom she has become as a student and as someone who has not been confined by her family’s economic circumstances. Carey also discussed determination as an aspect of family heritage and pride.

Ryan: Do you think that if you are rich or poor that is motivation to work harder or less hard?

Carey: I think you could be rich, wealthy, and think you can get away on their money, or you could be motivated by saying that your grandpa was a really hard worker and you take after him, you could do something like that. Or you could come from a not so wealthy family and be okay with that. You could want to strive more. It depends on the individual. How well you are motivated, how much you want it.

Ryan: And how about you? Does that come into play at all in terms of your family and background?

Carey: Um, I, my grandpas were both really hard workers, and they weren’t wealthy, but they were fine. And that kind of motivates me, seeing that growing up I didn’t have a college fund or anything like that.
Ryan: You wouldn’t be eligible for the scholarship if you came from a wealthy family.

Carey: Right and I guess that in general motivates me more. I want to be able to give my kids a college fund from when they are little, so they don’t have to worry about college. I don’t want them to take it for granted.

Continuing with the notion that determination shapes achievement more than economics, the segment of this interview began at that point, and then moved to how Carey saw the role that determination played in terms of her family, and ended when Carey discussed what that meant for her identity. Carey described her grandfathers as hard working. She believed they were able to live a life that was fine as a result of their work ethic. Carey recognized determination as a characteristic that defined her family heritage and this became an important part of her identity.

Carey also spoke about the relationship between identity and determination when she discussed her goal to provide a college fund for her children. While she wanted to provide her children with more than she had, she also stated that she wanted them to appreciate what it took to be able to afford that college fund. As she spoke about her wish for her children to appreciate this, she also implied that they should appreciate the determination and hard work that has been a part of her family for multiple generations. Implicit within this interview was how ingrained determination was within Carey’s construction
of identity. While I described the relationship between determination and identity within Carey’s transcripts, her data also lends to an understanding of the relationship between determination and self-regulation.

**Determination and Self-Regulation**

These students have learned that if they are determined, exert enough effort, and work hard they will eventually be successful and achieve their goals. They were determined to go to college and the scholarship that they have received was evidence that with determination, they could achieve their goals. Their parents could not provide the money for tutors or enrichment to help them do better in school, and as a result the students recognized they needed to be responsible for their own financial and academic success. In other words, their determination to earn a college education when they could not afford it, prompted the development and use of self-regulated learning behaviors. Debbie’s interview sheds light on how she related determination and self-regulation through goal setting.

While Debbie also believed that determination and hard work make it possible to transcend economics, she also had some experiences that gave her insights not expressed by other participants. In terms of income, Debbie was the only participant in the study whose family shifted their social class position from upper middle class to lower middle class/working poor. Debbie was also the only participant who volunteered. Through her volunteer experiences, Debbie
interacted with children who grew up in poor families. She shared her experiences when I asked her about the relationship between social class and goals.

Ryan: Do you think that your socioeconomic background influences your goals?

Debbie: Probably. Some people, I worked with elementary kids and with the Big Brother Big Sister program, and their parents don’t make that much. They are probably from a poor background and we asked the kids about their plans for the future, and they said they are not going to college. We were like why not? And they just said they couldn’t afford it, or they weren’t smart enough. But that is probably something that is not true, because they could get scholarships or they could get junior college and transfer credit, I don’t know, but…so they were just planning on going to work and not going to college.

Debbie recognized that something different was going on in the lives of these children, but she thought they were blind to the opportunities that could be available to them. Debbie articulated her frustration with the children’s need to develop self-regulation. Debbie believed that if these poor children were determined, then in turn, they would self-regulate and use different strategies that would enable them to go to college.

Debbie’s determination to achieve her goal helped her to use different strategies so she could afford college. Debbie’s worried that these poor children were unaware of similar options that could be available to them, and as a result,
she feared that they would not even imagine the goal of a college education. The children did not have access to role models who could show them that college was possible let alone the ways that these children could also achieve this goal.

While Debbie frames the relationship between determination and self-regulation in terms of her goals and how others could adopt similar strategies, Tracy provided another perspective about the relationship between determination and self-regulation when she discussed her goal for buying a house.

Ryan: So, do you think that one of your goals is to earn more money so you find yourself in a different position than how you grew up?

Tracy: Yeah, that is my motivation. Yeah. I mean, I completely already figured out how much money I should make over these next few years, so I can figure out when I can get my house. And what I can afford, and how much money I should have paid off by then.

Ryan: How did you learn to do that? Those kind of budgeting skills, like figuring out how much the house will cost, and all that kind of stuff? How did you go about solving that problem?

Tracy: I don't know. Um, well, I guess I talked to a lot of people who own houses, and I worked with banks a lot, so I know a lot about down payments and what that means, and like going about saving ventures, gosh, I don't know. I kind of taught myself about this. I don't think I ever picked it up anywhere, I just knew what I wanted and just kind of figured out from there.
Similar to Debbie, Tracy’s goals provided the link between determination and self-regulation. Yet Tracy’s discussion focused on distal goals and the strategies she anticipated employing to achieve them. While the evidence from Debbie’s interview exhibited a concern that the children who she volunteered with were not determined enough, Tracy’s determination led to her use of strategies to achieve her goals.

Here Tracy discussed how she wished to find herself in a different position from how she grew up. She believed that planning to buy and owning a house would provide a better quality of life. As she described her budget, it was evident that her determination had been articulated through specific ways for her to achieve this goal. While she could not describe how she developed these self-regulatory behaviors, the very act of describing these processes indicated her ability to enact complex strategies to work toward achieving her goal. Tracy did not specifically mention models that helped her to conceive her goals or learn the strategies that she used as she worked toward accomplishing that goal.

Within Debbie and Tracy’s interviews there were both similarities and distinct differences. They both talked about the lack of role models. However, Debbie expressed this in her concern that the children at Big Brothers / Big Sisters would not know that they could earn a college education. Similar to those children, Tracy also lacked a model. She did not have anyone to observe and develop budgeting skills from. Debbie fears the children at Big Brothers / Big
Sisters will have to give up. Tracy relied upon her determination to develop the skills necessary to work toward her goals.

_Determination as Potential_

When looking at determination and social class, we saw ambition and the value self-reliance and hard work over economic means. With identity, determination was at the core of how participants constructed their sense of self. Determination shaped the students’ self-regulation through their formation of goals and implementation of strategies. Yet within the data, determination seemed to be even more than how it functioned in these three categories.

Ross provided insight regarding determination’s potential:

It seems like there’s this spark that’s in everyone. You can call it a soul or whatever. I mean, people can do some pretty amazing things you see - you see people being kind to other people for no reason and you also see people hanging a black person because they learned to read – that sort of thing. And. I mean, it’s just - human nature has a dichotomy. And there’s potential and … sometimes you just don’t go anywhere with it and you’re not a bad person. (Ross, Interview 4)

I was asking Ross about how he resolved the tension between being a product of your environment and acting freely to achieve goals. In response, Ross described a spark that could lead to kindness, compassion, and progress. On the other hand, this same spark could also lead to cruelty, violence, and hatred. Ross’ description of the “spark” as potential to act seems analogous to determination.
With determination, people do amazing, thoughtful, irrational and sometimes unexplainable things. The participants described how this spark operated in their lives as their drive to succeed. Functioning in this manner, determination intersected social class, identity, and self-regulation and constructed a framework to contextualize the participants’ experiences. While determination was the umbrella theme framing the research, it is important to note that this sense of determination, while it was the participants’ truth and their path to their goals, that is also could be attributed to a larger discourse related to middle class identity (Stuber, 2006, Lawler, 2005).

Determination and the myth of meritocracy

While the participants talked about their sense of determination and how this will allow them to achieve their future goals and identities, their reliance on determination could be an example of false consciousness. Engels defines false consciousness as a means by which the proletariat maintains their power and keeps the workers productive. The workers believe that their efforts help the state, when in reality their labor ensures a high quality of life for the proletariat (Engels, 1893, http://www.marxists.org). The workers are unable to see through the proletariat’s lies that keep the workers productive and oppressed.

Determination and the belief that through hard work our goals are possible, could be a notion of false consciousness ingrained within a predominant middle class ideology that is based upon consumption and higher
levels of income that lead to greater levels of satisfaction and happiness (Lawler, 2005). While Marx and Engels articulate power as the tension between those who oppress and those who are marginalized, Foucault calls upon networks of power that are relational and pervasive (Mills, 2004).

While there may not necessarily be the dominant proletariat operating to maintain false consciousness in our society, it is possible, that the sense of determination that the participants believe in is recapitulated by what they have witnessed from neighbors, family members and friends. They believe that through determination they can earn a college degree, a higher paying job, and a better quality of life. Determination as a larger discourse is pervasive and spread through images they see in various media. Whether it was the high school graduation speaker who told them that all things are possible, or the number of books, television shows and movies that spread this same message, there is a discourse present in our society that propagates the belief that through determination, all is possible.

The participants could be performing their aspired middle class identity through their sense of determination. As discussed by Stuber (2006) and Lawler, 2005), an admirable trait of those who achieve middle class status is their determination to continue to improve one’s present economic circumstances. To embrace and perform a middle class identity, participants must subscribe into the power structures that construct that values that define those in the middle class.
Their sense of determination, while it seems to be their truth, could be representative of a larger network of power that have constructed the participants’ perceptions of how to be “middle class”.

Determination is not necessarily an innocent quality either. Without restraint, reckless determination could lead to an unhealthy obsession. While having and maintaining a goal is important, determination without abandon, can add tremendous amounts of stress and anxiety that could ultimately lead to unhealthy consequences. Determination could be a myth and ultimately detrimental to participants.

**Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes**

In addition to determination, I identified two overarching themes found at the intersection of social class, identity, and self-regulated learning. The first was goals in relationship to present self and the second was goals in relationship to future self.

While making the pass for social class I identified six themes with five sub-themes including descriptions of social class, spending habits, description of family’s social class status, education and social class, career, and friends and social class.

While making the pass for identity, I identified six themes and three sub-themes, including student identity, future career, work ethic, social class, family relationships, and identity consciousness.
Finally, during the pass for self-regulated learning I identified five themes and three sub-themes including goals, access to models, strategy use, performance appraisal, and reflection. Table 2 organizes the discrete themes and subthemes for social class, identity, and self-regulated learning that were consistently found within the data for all participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Identity Consciousness (Kegan)</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Self-Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>Social class defined as a function of others' stereotypes and is not necessarily defined by any other characteristics.</td>
<td>Developing initial Consciousness of institutions</td>
<td>1. Engineering major (interest in computers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lower middle class / working class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence that he engages in reflection, but has not been pushed to use new/different strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Social class is defined by income and the value you place on hard work.</td>
<td>Lacking consciousness of institutions and how they shape identity; discussion of institutions is framed by volition only</td>
<td>1. Business major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Working Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Actively reflects on performance and enacts new strategies to reach goals and improve performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Social class means different class groups based on income and networking (how many people you know), later defined by income and ability to afford children's education</td>
<td>Initial Consciousness of institutions; frequently framed through volition, but also recognizing how institutions can play a role in shaping self.</td>
<td>Biological Science major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working / Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Begins to reflect on feedback and implement new study strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of findings

continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Social Class Definition</th>
<th>Identity Consciousness (Kegan)</th>
<th>Identity Present</th>
<th>Possible</th>
<th>Self-Regulation Strategies</th>
<th>Development Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Social class is defined by income, social networks (PTA); perception of SC influenced by appearances</td>
<td>Developing initial conscious of institutions; primarily gained through volition</td>
<td>Biology major</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Develops multiple strategies; begins to more accurately assess tasks and used strategies to improve performance</td>
<td>Needs to develop more accurate measures of task analysis; how / when to use strategies to improve performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>Social class defined by material items, income, work ethic, and sense of entitlement; social class is not a barrier to success</td>
<td>Developing initial consciousness of institutions</td>
<td>Academic Major (Accounting to Political Science) Working class</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Improved performance based on more accurate appraisal.</td>
<td>Developing more accurate self-appraisals to set proximal and distal goals that are better suited to her strengths, skills, and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Social class defined by what a family can afford to do; Education should be the most defining characteristic of class</td>
<td>Moderate consciousness of institutions developing; more aware of how institutions shape others</td>
<td>Volunteer / Sociology major Middle class</td>
<td>Non-Profit Admin Not wealthy – middle class based on education but not necessarily income</td>
<td>Reflection on performance based on interim grades and adjusts effort / strategies accordingly</td>
<td>Needs to develop self-appraisal skills (ability, SE) in addition to more accurate predictions of task analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Social Class is created by the government for tax purposes</td>
<td>Initial Consciousness of institutions developing; discussed primarily through volition</td>
<td>Biology major / Religion minor Lower middle to upper middle</td>
<td>Doctor or medical research or both Not discussed</td>
<td>Advanced strategies for writing research paper – pre-writing, research, &amp; editing</td>
<td>Needs to develop more accurate reflection for task analysis &amp; performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Class

Understanding how the participants made sense of their own social class framed the conception of the project, the research design including the sampling procedures, and data analysis focused intently on where social class was evident in the transcripts. In the following sections I describe the participants’ definitions of social class as well as the ascribed meaning of their definitions. As seen in Table 2, the most salient findings about social class were how the participants defined social class. It was not surprising that many of the participants viewed social class as an outward sign of economic potential. If hard work and determination were required to achieve one’s goals, then logically, an increase in income would ensue.

Defining Social Class

For most of the participants, social class was defined by income. Many of the participants described their own families based on this interpretation and thought of social class in terms of its extremes. In other words, they only considered the rich as those who have luxuries and the poor as those who cannot afford food or shelter. Because most of the participant’s families had been able to afford life’s necessities and “a little extra,” they considered themselves middle class. Jamie’s description of her family was indicative of this description.

Ryan: When thinking about your own family what class would you say your family belongs to?
Jamie: Middle class. We have enough to get by with, and we had like certain things, we could go out every week for dinner and stuff, so….

Ryan: Where did you go to dinner? Different places all the time?

Jamie: Yeah, my mom likes to try different places, so sometimes we went to a Chinese buffet, and my step dad likes the Old Corral, he is a steak eater, so….

Jamie exemplified the perspective of several of the students (see Table 2). She wanted to think of herself as middle class. Placing her family into the middle class group did not necessarily align with characteristics she used to describe her family. As Jamie described her family throughout the course of the study, she referred to them as having to sacrifice and that her parents could not just give her money whenever she needed it. As Jamie grew up, her family’s socioeconomic position improved. Because they did not sacrifice as much as they once did, Jamie described them as middle class. This seemed to reflect Jamie’s personal experiences with social class as well as the predominant desire to consider one’s within the middle class. Jamie’s desire to place her family in the middle class and then talk about her family history in terms of sacrifice echoes findings from other research (Ostrove, 2003; Stuber, 2006; Lawler, 2005; Aries & Seider, 2005).

Contrasting the other participants, Ross and Melanie defined social class by others’ stereotypes or by the government, respectively. When asked his definition of social class, Ross states:

I think social class is a lot about your status. I don’t think…there is obviously no clear delineation between poor and rich, and I think a
lot of the delineation you see in American culture between poor and rich, that sort of thing, is caused by almost ignorance. If you are taught that all poor people are lazy, whatever, that sort of thing, and then you come to Columbus and you see a few poor black people that it just reinforces that stereotype. Social class shouldn’t have any bearing at all on how one does; it just does because everybody thinks it does.

For Ross, social class was basically an irrelevant concept that has been defined by how other people see the world. While he recognized that poverty engendered a perpetuating climate, he believed that the cyclical nature of poverty was based on others’ stereotypes and how those are imposed and internalized. To him, they were not important.

Ryan: How do you think…what do you think is the connection between social class and motivation?

Ross: If there is any, it’s more to do with how motivated their peers are than direct correlation with poorness or whatever. But many poor people aren’t as motivated, just because generations back a vicious cycle of not being motivated, so I think that might have some effect, but in the end, it is always a person’s choice. We are not like little balls rolling around in a track. We are people; we have some kind of effect on our actions, so….

Ryan: How about yourself? In your own personal situation?

Ross: I enjoy learning so I do it, I guess. I don’t know whether or not my social standing had anything to do with it, but I don’t feel some push to get out of the gutter and not be poor, I guess.

Ryan: So what does motivate you then?

Ross: I don’t know. I really enjoy taking classes, being knowledgeable about certain subjects and I enjoy programming, I enjoy computers.

Ryan: Long term plans; does that influence your motivation?
Ross: I would like to have money when I get a job, you know? It would be nice to have a good paying job, but that’s more about everybody likes security, you know, more than anything else.

For Ross, money was important, but he did not think of it as a defining aspect of social class. To Ross, money represented a practical necessity. Ross saw social class created by people’s associations with money, and their related stereotypes. He seemed to resist any definition that might be imposed by that stereotype. Melanie saw things similarly, but rather than stereotypes, she believed that social class is a manifestation of the government, serving to determine tax brackets.

Melanie defined social class by stating:

Well, [social class] is just something set up by the government, like brackets, that determine who pays what taxes, in my mind. I don’t think there is really a big problem with social class nowadays. I mean, people marry outside of what is considered in their class all the time, so you don’t have it for that reason, and really unless you have one extreme or the next, it is just strictly something that the government chooses as far as okay you fall in this bracket so you are going to pay X amount of taxes, and you fall in this bracket.

For Melanie, social class was a construction of the government. She believed the income and the privileges that may be associated with money were not defining characteristics in our contemporary society.

While all the participants believed their economic situation did not pre-determine their potential, Ross’ and Melanie’s definitions were characterized by their belief that social class was irrelevant. This was also evident when Ross
described how he could tell if someone was rich, middle class or poor. All of the participants described social class differences using material possessions like clothing, homes, and cars. Ross changed his mind while answering the question and gave the example of Steven King who always is seen wearing a pair of jeans and a sweater despite his wealth and fame. Ross’ conception of social class differed from the others. He was similar to the others in his initial description, but as he thought through what social class really looked like and how it was so difficult to interpret from clothing and material goods, he changed his descriptions and focused instead on social class as a convention of stereotype. For Ross, it was our gross generalizations that typify our interpretation and description of social class status.

Thinking of social class either as a social construction based on the public’ stereotypes or as a set of government policies allowed Ross and Melanie to externalize the definition of social class and, in doing so, consider class status as irrelevant and someone else’s concern. Ross and Melanie did not see social class as a salient component within their identity. As we saw previously, social class did not define the participants, determination and their potential to overcome social class defined their lives.

Within the definition of social class, the participants did not typically acknowledge how their social class position related to their eligibility for the scholarship. It seemed as though they only thought about their scholarship when they risked losing it and what the economic costs would entail. When they talked about it as an accomplishment it was within the context of their academic
achievements. While the participants did consider their ability to afford a college education as an aspect of social class, they believed that if your parents could afford to pay for your education, then you may not risk as much and you may not work as hard to earn good grades or learn in your classes. As Carey and Tracy described when asked about the relationship between social class and education, for the wealthy, a college education is simply something else to spend money on. Whereas for the middle, working class, or poor students, a college education is an investment into the future and so the participants believed that those who have more to gain also have more to lose.

The Intersection of Social Class Status with Identity

Within their descriptions of the effort put forth in school by different social class groups, Carey and Tracey described their perceptions of what it means to be wealthy, middle, working class or poor. In their descriptions, they focused on social class; however, they also touched upon identity. While the participants may have primarily defined social class by income, they implicitly assigned values and identities to what it means to be wealthy, middle class or poor. When they discussed their perceptions about the relationship between education and social class, the participants described how social class and identity were intersected. As the participants described and made meaning of how they understood social class in their schools and communities, they began to negotiate the external and internal influences of social class on their lives.

For the participants, social class was an indication of income and for most of them this could be assessed by others by looking at material items, such as
clothing, automobiles, and homes. In this regard, social class was an object; something that was separate from their sense of self. Within identity development, the process by which something transitions from being an object external to the self to an internal aspect of the self, or subject, is a paramount moment characterizing development (Kroger, 2004). The intersection of social class and identity represents the transition from social class as external object to internal subject. Through my conversations with the participants, I asked them questions to better understand how they made meaning of social class as an external characteristic and how it may or may not have related to their internal sense of self. Through my discussions with Ross, I present the intersection of social class and identity.

In previous interviews, Ross described social class as external from his experiences and unrelated to his academic success. I wanted to know more about how he perceived the relationship between the conditions where he lived and how this impacted his identity. Evident from my discussion with him, I pushed Ross to tell me more about how he evaded the cycle of poverty that he had previously described when he discussed his hometown.

Ryan: I've got one final thing that I wanted to hear more about. When we talked about social class in the past you were talking about how there wasn't much of a connection between that and academic achievement, but in another interview you actually talked about how if you grew up poor that sometimes that perpetuates a cycle of poverty because you don't know anything different.

Ross: Yeah….um….I think that if the public school systems are better then there would be a lot less of a connection but things are in a terrible state right now like seeing first hand in
my school people go through the entire ah ya know K-12 system, graduate and they still have a 7th grade education. There are people in math classes who couldn’t take the square root of a number or couldn’t square a number like even like 9 nobody could understand the concept; and there’s people who take English classes and just do a report on the chronicles of Narnia or something that’s really child reading. My English teacher [is] trying to push these kids, but the entire time up until then nobody pushed them, ya know. And I think if you have a more consistent public schooling and they emphasize more critical thinking and less just let’s squeezing one out and I mean that alluding to taking a shit literally – then there would be less connection because people would see that there’s a bigger world outside. [I]n one sense it is perpetuating and in another sense everyone has almost limitless potential to do anything so I guess it’s just what you’re presented with.

Ryan: So why and how are you working towards breaking the cycle?

Ross: I mean I guess reading is a big part of that and meeting new people. [C]ollecting experiences I think is a great way to do it. [S]o I read a lot but I also hang out and play video games a lot and that sort of thing.

Within this discussion, Ross recognized the relationship between social class and the quality of education in his high school. Teachers at his school were not challenging kids to learn and as a result, keeping them in poverty. But Ross was working his way out of that despite having the same education.

As he discussed how his school shaped the identity of his peers, Ross continued to distance social class from its effects on his identity. Ultimately, Ross was not satisfied with what he learned in high school and so his curiosity led him to read more and consequentially travel to another community to access a wider selection of books. He did not subscribe to the inferior schooling that his
peers had accepted. He maintained his distance from the effect of social class on his identity. For Ross, the intersection between social class and identity was to deny that social class affected his sense of self.

Ross recognized the impact of social class on his school and how this affected his peers. He did not articulate any connections between how social class impacted his desire and need to literally travel the distance to read books that captured his interest and teach him skills in computer programming. For Ross, the intersection between social class and identity led to his determination to read and learn more. Similar to Ross, the intersection between social class and identity was evident for Tracy as seen in her determination to graduate from college in two years and for Tina as seen by her determination to be the first in her family to “do something with her life”.

While the participants differed by the degree to which they acknowledged the connection between social class and their identity, the intersection between social class and identity prompted a new goal or behavior. Dissimilar to the students who Ross saw in his school, the participants in this study did not passively submit to a life confined by their economic situation. For the participants, determination to live life in a better and different way transcended economics and influenced how their interpretations of social class and their construction of identity.

The participants saw determination as the means by which they could attain their goals. However, their belief in their own determination could also be interpreted as their willingness to accept the hegemonic power structures at
play within middle class America. Kurlioff and Reichert (2003) observed similar patterns related to hegeomonic power structures at play in the elite boarding school where their research took place. Within their studies, the students who had been part of the school culture for their entire academic experience could recognize that something was different about the students who gained acceptance later in their academic careers, but they could not articulate the differences in specific terms. Ross and the other participants are similar.

Ross believes that everyone has the same potential to work hard and earn the grades that he has received. He articulated that intelligence and social class are not related. This belief could be the result of false consciousness at work. Discursive forces found throughout society propagate messages that echo the notion that through determination and hard work we can achieve our goals and dreams. The belief in effort and determination may be part of the myth of meritocracy that is relied upon to maintain order in society.

If Ross internalized a connection between the influence of social class and his own academic performance, then it creates a space to doubt the hegemony that has provided the foundation for his academic performance. Disempowering the hegemony that determination leads to a different social class, has the potential to lead to apathy, despondence, and a dismantling of the perceived requirement that a college education is a credential and pre-requisite into the middle class. The hegemonic belief in determination and hard work has become a transcendant power structure that has sustained our class structure in the United States. Ross’ articulation in everyone’s potential to achieve reifies this
hegemony and parallels what the “Lifers” articulated in Kurlioff’s and Reichert’s (2003) research.

Identity development takes place as we negotiate who we are and interpret what our experiences mean in relationship to how we define ourselves (Kroger, 2004). Ross demonstrated that process as he described himself in relationship to his peers and school. Additional findings related to identity are described from two different, yet similar perspectives: Kegan’s developmental theory provides the first perspective. The second aspect of identity stems from the participant’s present and future possible self that emerged from the data. While these perspectives demonstrated how participants conceptualized who they are, determination continued as a consistent intersection in these findings.

Identity and Identity Development

Identity and Identity development are considered from two perspectives: Kegan’s developmental theory and present – and future-self perspectives. Table 2 highlights the findings from both consciousness as well as present- and future-self perspectives (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Cinnirella, 1998).

While Kegan has five stages of consciousness that characterize development, the findings in table 1 focus on the fourth stage: consciousness of institutions. In table 2, notice the differences among the participants relative to their consciousness of institutions. None of the participants seemed to call upon consciousness of institutions as the primary context to define identity. Debbie’s interviews evidenced that she was aware of how institutions were shaping her
sense of self. Tracy on the other end of the spectrum seemed to have the least awareness of how institutions shaped her identity. The other participants indicated some initial awareness of consciousness of institutions. The other stages of consciousness are discussed later using Jamie as a critical case.

Focusing on identity development through consciousness of institutions was done to focus on how social class contributed to identity development. Social class is an institution and is also composed of other institutions like education and careers. Institutions are sites of power. Institutions construct social norms, expectations, and behaviors. Considering how identity was negotiated through consciousness of institutions became a way to see how power influenced identity.

*Identity as Becoming Conscious*

Within Kegan’s theory, identity development takes place through the negotiation of loss and gain resulting in five stages of consciousness. Our awareness, or consciousness, constructs identity. In Table 3, I present Kegan’s identity development theory as it aligns with development of social class identity. Table 3 highlights Kegan’s stages of consciousness by more deeply explaining his theoretical perspective as well as how his theory can be contextualized to understand evolving class consciousness. I chose to highlight Jamie as a critical case study because she represented both breadth and depth in terms of her development and the data shared during her interviews. Jamie was also the critical case analyzed by peer reviewers. The table begins on the left with the names of the stages of consciousness. Because Kegan sees development
taking place through the process of negotiating gain and loss, this is the focus for
the next two columns. In the fourth column provides evidence from Jamie’s
interviews that I used to evidence demonstrating the shift in her social class
identity from the perspective of Kegan’s theory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Development</th>
<th>Awareness Gained</th>
<th>Feelings of Loss</th>
<th>Jamie’s Statements about Her Social Class Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming Conscious:</strong> Growth &amp; Loss of the Incorporative Stage</td>
<td>Understanding “self” as having rather than being its reflexes. (Ability for infant to recognize someone different in the mirror looking back) Realization that social class exists. But not able to differentiate class differences from self. The self defines how we understand the world.</td>
<td>Loss of immaturity. No longer carefree. You are accountable.</td>
<td>When I was two, my mom worked full time all the time; my grandma babysat us, and then we were on food stamps and then after awhile things started getting better; we moved out of my grandmother’s house. We lived there so my mom could get back on her feet after the divorce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming Conscious of the Outside World:</strong> Growth and Loss of Impulsive Balance</td>
<td>Understand a world separate from you exists. Understand everyone based on your perspective. See the world through your eyes. If I am working class, then everyone else is too.</td>
<td>Loss of idealism; Loss of possibility that life can be better/different/worse</td>
<td>Described peers saying, “They were conscious about work – what they had to do in life to get places because they weren’t just handed the money” (Interview 4, 562-564) Where would you put your current supervisor in this chart? Working class because she’s a researcher so she probably doesn’t get paid that much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Identity and social class continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Development</th>
<th>Awareness Gained</th>
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<th>Jamie’s Statements about Her Social Class Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming Conscious of Volition:</strong> Growth and Loss of Imperial Balance</td>
<td>Develop awareness of own needs, wishes, and ideals. Aware others may not share the same needs, wishes, ideals. Goals begin to define features. I am going to earn my college education. I hope to be a doctor. My goals define me more than my social class.</td>
<td>Loss associated with coordinating goals, values. Sacrifice to achieve goals. Loss of possibility; inability to value differences because the value from diversity cannot be recognized.</td>
<td>“I knew that my family didn’t have enough money for me to go to college and I had to work hard with my academics to get scholarships.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming Conscious of Others:</strong> Growth and Loss of Interpersonal Balance</td>
<td>Conscious of important others’ sense of self. Oriented towards mutuality in relationships. Social-class self is defined by relationships with others who are share similar social class backgrounds and recognition that differences may exist in social class. Networking with others can influence your social class status.</td>
<td>Loss associated with disappointment in relationships. Autonomy may be compromised. Transition to institutions – recognition that relationships may change based on status. What do your failure/your success mean about me and our relationship?</td>
<td>(Discussing romantic relationships and education) A high school education – that would be pushing it. I don’t know how far they would be able to get if they were going back and getting their GED and then planning on going to a career center to get a good job; it’s more about me being secure in my income because I want to make sure that I don’t need anyone to support me. I want to be able to support myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Become Conscious of Institutions:</strong> Growth and Loss of the Institutional Balance</td>
<td>Become aware of institutional values / ideals. Conformity vs. Self-authorship. Institutions grant certain credentials that lead to status and contribute to social class.</td>
<td>Feel disappointment with the institution. Loss of autonomy. Loss of individuality. Loss of certainty. Potential loss of relationships due to different institutional affiliations.</td>
<td>“I can’t go on to medical school if I don’t pass the chemistry classed…there’s a list of sciences you have to have to get into medical school…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Becoming Conscious**

Kegan’s process of becoming conscious as reflecting the ability to recognize that one exists in a world that is separate from the self. One develops consciousness of existing in the world and this consciousness allows for the very early stages of identity development (Kroger, 2004). Applied to social class, becoming conscious implies an awareness that social class exists. In Jamie’s quotation, I saw how she recognized that her family was poor because her mother worked all the time; they lived with their grandmother and survived using food stamps. Here Jamie recognized that her circumstances were different from others. She was conscious of social class in her life.

**Becoming consciousness of volition.**

When identity is shaped by our goals, wishes and desires, Kegan refers to this as consciousness of volition. In this stage of consciousness, goals construct the self. For Jamie and the other participants, social class was not the defining characteristic of identity. Rather, it was their goal to change their social class that defined identity. Their consciousness of volition was their desire to improve their social class status. The quotation from Jamie demonstrated how her educational goals and the need for a scholarship typified her consciousness of volition and how this defined her sense of self.

**Becoming consciousness of others.**

When defined by the consciousness of others stage of development, identity is defined by the relationships with others. Rather than recognizing that a
relationship is something external to the self, here relationships construct identity. Here social class is defined based on our friends, family members, and other relationships. It is through these relationships that we may claim that we are middle class or otherwise. The definition of social class would be dependent upon those relationships.

While we develop our self through these relationships, there is a much greater potential for loss of self if these relationships sour. Because the self is defined by these relationships, a failing relationship has the potential to be severely damaging to one’s identity. Also, defining ourselves based on relationships with others has the potential to compromise the goals that were established in the previous stage of development. Considering the potential for loss and its impact on identity is particularly relevant in the case of social class identity.

None of the participants shared instances where their family had not supported their goal to earn a college degree. Jamie alluded to this when she said, “Yeah I have moments where I just break down and say okay I’m done. I’m going back home. I call my mom when I have that.” Jamie continued to describe how her mom provided her emotional support during these times. The fourth column of the table shows how Jamie defined herself through her relationship with her mother. This relationship also aligned with Jamie’s goals evident as part of her consciousness of volition. The alignment between her consciousness of volition and consciousness of others, contributed to Jamie’s ability to be resilient when she faced difficulty. If their families had been less supportive, the
participants might have faced the conflict between their consciousness of volition and their consciousness of relationships.

*Becoming consciousness of institutions.*

When initially thinking about institutions, I believed that Kegan referred to those institutions that typically reside in physical structures. Examples like churches and schools immediately came to mind. However as the participants have taught me, Kegan’s theory also refers to our identity development taking place in the context of social institutions. Institutions like marriage and conversely divorce played significant roles in the participants’ lives. While none of the participants seemed to comprehensively negotiate their identity through consciousness of institutions, the development toward this stage consciousness was starting to take place. For example, the quotations in table 3, illustrate how Jamie’s described medical school and high school as two institutions that related to her identity. However in both of these examples, she was not defined by the institutions, rather it was how the institutions influenced her decisions. Here it seemed that her identity was defined by medical school as a goal rather than as an institution, yet she recognized that medical school as an institution shaped her decisions and her future self. When she described her high school, she related this to not feeling prepared for college, but again this was not central to her sense of self. Here again, she recognized high school as an institution that contributed to who she is, but it was not a salient dimension of how she described herself.
Over the course of her first year of college, Jamie’s identity is defined by consciousness of volition and so these institutional examples began to show how she recognized that institutions exist and how she related to them, but this was more tangential as the institutions related to her goals and not necessarily her identity. Using Kegan’s theory of identity development, findings from the data indicated that participants were primarily conscious of volition and moving toward consciousness of others and consciousness of institutions. The other aspect related to identity was how participants described their present and future possible self.

**Identity as Present and Future Self**

The participants described their identities differently. How they defined differed in according to categorical descriptions and salience. Whether it was Ross’ description of himself as an atheist or how Melanie talked about herself as cultured, the participants used a variety of characteristics. All of the participants used academic major and social class status as a way to describe their identity. These descriptions directly related to their discussion of how they envisioned their future self as well. Table 2 captures these characteristics and shows the difference from present to envisioned future self.

With the exception of Debbie, all participants envisioned a future social class status that is better than their current status. Because Debbie wished to pursue a career as a non-profit administrator, she saw herself as part of the working class. Debbie described this in the following:
Ryan: Where do you hope that you’ll be on this chart when you graduate from college? Or, within five to ten years from graduating?

Debbie: By myself honestly I hope to be in working class.

Ryan: Why do you put yourself there?

Debbie: Because realistically, I can’t expect to make that much early in a non-profit. I don’t know. I’ll be fulfilled (laughter).

Ryan: So you’re using the income as the primary definer?

Debbie: Oh yeah. Five to ten years I don’t know. I might own a home, I might not. I hope I have health coverage.

Ryan: Is that important to you though? Which class you would find yourself in?

Debbie: I just don’t want to be poor. Like money stuff not incredibly important like enough to pay the bills and enough to be comfortable and feel safe. Uh…it’s kind of scary if I wouldn’t have enough to like get by month to month or pay check to paycheck and that would be really bad because I would probably end up working at some job that I don’t really care about because my job that I do care about doesn’t really pay anything, but I mean not all non-profits pay you nothing. You can have positions there that can pay a lot. I just have to work my way up first.

Debbie differed from other participants because she did not think primarily about income as a motivation for her career. She admitted that “money stuff [is] not incredibly important” and that her career goals were determined more by her happiness than by her potential income. Debbie’s family lived a middle to upper middle class lifestyle for most of her life. Due to her parent’s divorce, their economic situation had recently changed, and this made Debbie eligible for the scholarship. However, the recent change in their economic status did not seem
to influence Debbie’s career goals. As she described, Debbie was less motivated by the prospect of a big paycheck and instead thought that a sense of satisfaction and happiness with her career would be more important motivation.

The career goals of the other participants were motivated either by a combination of income and happiness if not income alone. None of the other participants discussed happiness as their primary motivation for their career goals.

Carey was one participant who earlier in the course of her first year of college discussed income as her primary motivation for her career goal. As Carey changed her major from accounting to political science, she articulated that income was not the only motivating factor that was important to her.

Carey realized that accounting was not the right fit for her academic major. Carey had seen that her aunt was an accountant and that she made a good income from that career. Seeing this and thinking about her good grades in math, Carey thought that accounting would be a good potential career for her to pursue. Here Carey talked about the motivation for her career goals.

Carey: Yeah. I have a lot more ambition and a lot more passion I think for like what I’m trying to do now. Obviously lawyers make pretty good money which intrigues me and ya know I like it. I like the study of law and that’s interesting to me. I think I came in thinking accountants can make pretty good money so I’m going to do that. Ya know? It was a lack of intrigue and lack of passion for a career. I think since I have both aspects now it’s more driving towards a goal.

Ryan: And the idea for being an accountant, didn’t you get that from your aunt?
Carey: Yeah. Her sister-in-law was an accountant. They lived down in Houston. That was a long time ago that I kinda figured hey this would be probably a good path to go in and then I was always good in math and numbers in high school and then I got here and it went downhill.

After struggling for two quarters, Carey thought about her major and switched to political science. In the following, Carey described how her classes were a better fit:

I always thought I was a set in stone person [who] liked math. I liked algebra more than geometry because it was set in stone. This is how you did it...this is how you did it, but now I'm kinda figuring out that's not really me anymore. I mean in the writing class it's just open discussion about this and that and people will throw their opinions out and in my poli sci class since this it's general he tries to stay away from people's opinions on issues, but he still brings up points where you think about things all the time. And my theater class is obviously expressing yourself through any form of anything. I don't know I guess I would say it's more me because I can..I have the openness to express opinions and beliefs..opinions or things that I feel strongly about or anything like that I guess.

Carey experienced an identity shift as she gained self-awareness. She had to internalize what her academic struggles meant in terms of her sense of self. She admitted not really being passionate about accounting and having based that future identity on a desire to earn a good salary and her belief that she was a “set in stone person” who liked math. As she thought more about her identity and wrestled with her academic struggles, she realized that political science and law may fit her better.

Through this process, Carey realized that expressing her opinion and being passionate about her career were important aspects of her identity. While
Debbie was driven by her happiness, Carey was driven by her aspirations to earn a good income. It was only after she experienced academic struggles in accounting, that she considered her satisfaction with the career as an important factor in the decision. As we ended our final interview, Carey shared her thoughts about work, “I can’t imagine going to work every day and hating it. I can’t imagine it. That’s not what I want to do in anything. I mean I was afraid that if I went into accounting ultimately I would get to the point where I was like what am I doing? By switching I think, hopefully, that’s not gonna happen.”

While neither Debbie nor Carey described their career goals based on the economic situations they experienced as children, it seemed that this had an impact upon their decisions. Debbie was more motivated by what she thought would make her feel fulfilled. At first Carey was primarily motivated by income. Her career goals later switched when she started to give consideration to what would sustain her happiness in a career. As she made this recognition, she performed better in her classes and was happier. This happiness was evident in how she discussed her present self as a student and her future self as a lawyer.

Interestingly, the findings from their interviews do not necessarily align with Hoyle and Sherrill (2006) who described the possible self as not regulating behavior. Perhaps the relationship between future possible self and self-regulation related to the strength of the relationship between the behavior and the future possible self. With Carey, for example, the decision to change her major had a very strong relationship to her future possible self. The consequences of failure also impacted her present and future self. Preservation
of both aspects of her sense of self may have been what regulated her behavior in this instance.

The identity findings in this research point to volition and social class as intersecting aspects that the participants used to define who they are. Using Kegan’s theoretical lens and the participants own points of view demonstrated their determination to be someone better. Through their own words, the participants described that income alone was not enough to successfully negotiate an integrated identity. With Carey we saw that determination to make a good income was only one aspect of her identity. Determination to be happy and aligning goals with self-awareness also contributed to her present and future sense of self.

_Troubling a determined identity_

When looking at the findings related to identity, the danger of determination is evident. If determination without limits becomes the most salient aspect of identity, it has the potential to become an unhealthy and blinding obsession. When one internalizes determination as a primary component of identity, the individual consequentially prioritizes determination as a salient dimension that has the potential to construct the core definition of self. As Marcia (1993) has described the core, he stated that the core of the identity is to allow one to “trace one’s history in a meaningful way to one’s present situation and…extend that line into probable futures” (p. 8). If determination is to become a core aspect of identity that drives other aspects of the self, then its integration
becomes a cornerstone of the self that can potentially influence all future behaviors and related ways in which the self is understood and defined.

The stress that accompanies this type of determined identity seems evident in the research conducted by Suldo, Shaunessy, and Hardesty (2008) who found that high achieving high school students who participated in an International Baccalaureate Program experienced higher levels of stress related to academic tasks when compared to their peers. Half of the participants in this research study also participated in similar programs that allowed them to earn college credit while still in high school and it seems that some of them have also experienced stress like the students in the study conducted by Suldo et al. (2008).

The participants within this research have integrated a strong sense of determination into their respective identities. Whether it is Carey’s determination to live a happy and prosperous life, Tracy’s determination to accomplish her academic and financial goals, or Debbie’s determination to have a meaningful career, they all have evidenced that an important aspect of their identity is constructed by determination. The danger of integrating determination within the core sense of self is that it has the potential to lead to unhealthy amounts of stress that can lead to physical and mental consequences (Suldo, et al, 2008).

While I will never know what happened to Melanie and her identity, I wonder if her decision to withdraw from the research was mediated by the stress that she experienced as a result of her determination. During my second interview with her, she disclosed having health related issues related to stress.
Did her determination to earn high grades ultimately lead to poor health? While I will probably never confirm the answer to that question, it is quite likely that the answer is yes.

A determined person, who has developed health ways to cope with stress, has the potential to lead a fulfilled and psychologically satisfied life. However, when the sense of determination becomes more extreme and results in compulsive behavior, then the risks of stress are more dangerous. Determination can blind people from seeing other means to achieving their goals. For example, Tracy did not have to graduate from Ohio State in two years; however, her determination to achieve this goal shaped her present identity as a student. She could have looked to achieve this goal in more than one quarter; however, her determination, as a function of her identity seems to have blinded her ability to see this as a viable pursuit. Consistent with what Suldo et al. (2008) have found, high achieving students need to develop ways to cope with the demands that they place upon themselves. Otherwise, their determination can lead to unhealthy physical and mental stress.

_The Intersection of Identity and Self-regulation_

Carey’s description of her change of major also lends itself to examining the intersection between identity and self-regulation. As we saw with identity, internalizing aspects of the self was important to development. Acquiring self-regulation also is a process by which one observes external models and adopts those behaviors as a part of an internal repertoire. However, does the very act of
self-regulating change one’s identity? This question leads us to consider the intersection between identity and self-regulation.

Carey was able to reflect and change her strategies to improve her academic performance. As Carey previously articulated, she used to think that she was a “math person.” Her poor performance in her math classes changed this perceived identity and as a result her future vision of her career. Carey engaged in reflective thinking about her identity that directly correlated to her self-regulation. She found classes that “fit” her better. While she discussed this in terms of her ability to express herself, it also seemed that these courses were better suited to her repertoire of self-regulated learning strategies and behaviors. During the shift in her identity, we saw a shift in the self-regulation behaviors. With math, she almost gave up and was left frustrated. Yet in her writing class, she talked about her ability to find good sources and how that allowed her to earn an A on an assignment. The transition in identity led her to use more sophisticated skills that helped her to earn more success.

Tracy’s goals also illustrated the intersection between identity and self-regulated learning. Tracy surprised me when she originally told me that she was going to graduate with her degree in business in two years. I actually thought that I did not hear her correctly or that there was a mistake with the transcription. When she mentioned this again in a later interview, I had to ask her more about this goal.
Tracy: I would have originally said that it [the scholarship] made me more motivated, but even now, I think that fact that I am getting out in two years is motivating me more. I think it puts a lot less pressure on me to find a job and to pay off loans. It does put the added pressure of keeping my grades up, but I think I would have that pressure either way. I still don’t understand why I have a [work study; part-time] job right now; I should not have done that. I don’t have to do it; we just wouldn’t get the money for it that way. I guess it would motivate me to study pretty hard, though. Probably because getting the grades I am getting right now, I probably just would have ended up slacking off and saying okay well I can get three B’s, but now I am like no I can’t do that, I have to try extra hard, so yeah, I guess it does make me a lot more motivated. But I have so many more expectations with the family now; it is like I have proven myself and I have to keep proving myself.

Ryan: Why the goal to graduate in two years?

Tracy: mmm. one, I want to do a big graduation thing, because they don’t do it, and just because I know it is a really challenging goal, I know it would be very easy for me to do it in two years and a quarter, and I never have really been one to settle. I am working this hard; I might as well make it achievable.

Part of Tracy’s identity is her ability to accomplish her goals. Through this description it was evident that Tracy is determined to achieve. She wanted to start earning money as soon as she could and she also recognized that she did not want to acquire any more debt than was absolutely necessary. Through this passage, it was evident that identity and self-regulation intersected. Tracy’s identity was characterized by her ability to achieve her goals. Essentially she constructed her sense of self based upon her determination to be a college graduate in two years. Consequentially, her self-regulation stemmed from this goal and contributed to her ability to construct this identity.
Does a substantive change in your self-regulation qualitatively change who you are? In other words, if we believe that at least part of our identity is defined by our behaviors and possibly our perceptions of who we are based on our goals and how we spend our time, then when those aspects of the self change, it is consequential that our identity changes as well?

For example, a core aspect of Tracy’s identity is her determination and work ethic. When I first met her, I thought Tracy would pursue a career in agriculture and frankly I was surprised when she told me about her aspirations in business. She had told me about the calves she raised since birth, including how she de-horned and castrated them. Tracy also spoke about her participation in the soil science competition as one of her proudest accomplishments. She had to measure erosion at different gradients and interpret how they would change in different landscapes. She described a collection of experiences, knowledge, and skills that would serve her well in agriculture. However, she always perceived herself as a business woman and throughout the year, this identity strengthened.

Perhaps, her self-regulated behavior to work toward that goal worked hand in hand to also make this a more salient aspect of her identity. In our final interview, Tracy talked about enjoying all of her classes and finding value in how they would contribute to her future career.

Tracy: I know when I came here I was really worried about ya know picking the right major because I didn’t really know a lot about what I was doing and as the actual classes progress, I’m really really starting to enjoy it and I’m actually at the point where I wish I could take them all because except for
human resources which I’m not really big in, but there is yeah…I just love the classes. I love the material and I just I really, really, love the ideas and the thought processes and

Ryan: Is there a particular area within business that you’re really flocking towards – or that you enjoy a little more than others?

Tracy: Um…this ah 330 class that I’m taking right now which is the second part of statistics – I hated the first part – this one it’s like really really great and definitely accounting. I really like accounting.

Ryan: So it’s a continuation of stats?

Tracy: Yeah…and this one I like so much more. It’s all about analyzing data um figuring out what to do and actual business decisions – it’s really, really cool.

Later in the interview, I asked Tracy about how she was feeling about starting her summer internship where she would work in one of the business departments for John Deere.

Ryan: Do you feel like you’re ready for your summer internship more so than you were in the fall?

Tray: Oh yes! Definitely yeah! I definitely wouldn’t try to take the skills I didn’t have then but yeah I feel like I’ve learned a lot and a lot of how to handle things and deal with things deal with stress. I’m sure this internship is going to be like one thing after the other ya know I’m sure they’ll keep us pretty busy and focused but yeah I think I think I’m good. I’m pretty excited about it. I think I’m a lot more focused now on what I have to do. It would be nice to take it easy and take an extra quarter, but that’s not what I really want to do and so I’m happy with where I am right now and not thrilled with the grades I have but ya know hopefully recruiters will be.

In these excerpts, Tracy discussed how she had changed, including her love of her business classes. She found enjoyment in the material, the ideas, and the thought process. She also felt prepared to start her summer internship. It seemed like our first conversation where Tracy told me about soil science and
the animals she raised was years ago and I would have even believed that this was a different person from the young woman I met in late August.

As her identity shifted from a farmer to an aspiring business professional, her use of self-regulated learning also developed and strengthened her ability to adopt those new aspects of self that were part of her goals and future possible self. The intersection of identity and self-regulated learning allowed me to interpret her ascribed meaning to her goals and her identity. One without the other would leave a less complete understanding of who Tracy is and how she negotiated the development of her identity as it reflected her goals and her behaviors.

Through the intersection of identity and self-regulated learning, I focused on goals as congruent with identity and as a defining aspect of self-regulation. However there were additional ways in which the participants grew in their reported use of self-regulated learning.

**Self-Regulated Learning**

The participants discussed both their reported use of various self-regulated learning behaviors as well as the struggles that they encountered during their first year of college. The section on self-regulated learning begins with the participants’ reported use of self-regulation and transitions to the struggles that were discussed. Table 2 highlights the findings related to both reported use and opportunities for the development of additional self-regulated skills. Within the table, it is evident that all participants reported data that fell into
both categories. While the participants differed according to the sophistication and variety of self-regulated strategies and skills that they reported, what they had in common was the ability to apply new behaviors that they believed helped them to progress towards their goals. These differences were also evident when participants discussed the struggles they faced.

Students' Reported Enactment of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

In general, all of the students who earned the scholarship had most likely developed and used self-regulation. To gain acceptance at Ohio State University and to be distinguished as one of the 88 first year students who received the scholarship, each had to demonstrate high academic achievement. The participants continued to report new ways that they developed their self-regulated learning capacity.

As a general trend, the participants reflected on their performance and all attempted new strategies that they believed would help them to improve. For some participants, like Tina, this was as simple as opening her Chemistry text after not doing so all quarter. For others, like Melanie this included sophisticated pre-writing strategies that she used when writing a research paper.

Here Melanie described how she approached a research paper on religion.

Ryan: How about preparing for a final paper or examination last quarter? What would you do to prepare for those?

Melanie: Well, the final paper I already have a good amount written at least. I start a couple weeks in advance,
because in finals we kind of might get stuck or something like that.

Ryan: And how would you go about the whole writing process?

Melanie: It kind of depends on what I am writing on. If it is a research paper, I am going to make out actual points I want to find and do the research and stuff.

Ryan: Did you do that for your religion class last quarter?

Melanie: Yeah, we had a final paper writing about our experience going to a different religious temple, so it was just recalling details and stuff, because I had gone to a Hindu temple when I was 15 or 16 for another religion course, so it was recalling details and I looked online at pictures again to refresh about actual imagery and stuff. Then I would make out points I would do on it and put them in the right order and go from there. Then write the whole thing, or as much as I can, walk away, and then come back to it about two days later. Then revise it and stuff. Then for a final, I would just write down everything I need to know, break it down from there and start to study, and go at it in chunks.

In this example, Melanie discussed an elaborate way that she approached her research paper. She began her writing well in advance, incorporated visualization strategies, and worked on her assignment in manageable chunks.

While all the participants exhibited different degrees of self-regulation, Melanie seems to have articulated more advanced strategies than the other participants. However, all of the participants also talked about their struggles. It was through their struggles that they articulated the need to develop new and more sophisticated self-regulated learning behaviors. It wasn’t that the participants were deficient compared to their peers, it was that they lacked models who they could observe and develop self-regulation from.
Zimmerman described four developmental levels to acquire regulatory skills. These include observation, emulation, self-control, and self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000). Having access to a model to observe is critical to this development. Tracy, Tina, Jamie and Carey aspired to be the first college graduates in their family. Ross and Debbie’s parents were working in jobs that did not demand the academic skills required of their children in college. As a result, only Melanie had access to academic role models in the family who could be observed and emulated to develop self-regulatory skill. The other participants had to learn through the difficult process of trial and error. Throughout the course of the year, it became evident that Tina experienced the greatest academic struggles and also could benefit from developing self-regulated behaviors.

**Struggles with Self-Regulation & Opportunities for Development**

Tina struggled considerably during her first year of college and in the Spring Quarter she had to re-take two of her courses. She needed to develop the ability to become aware of her performance, particularly as it related to tests. In terms of self-regulation, Tina articulated a specific goal to become a medical professional and to achieve that she recognized that she needed to do well in her chemistry classes. However, she was unable to articulate and implement a strategy to achieve that goal and experienced particular difficulty with her performance on tests.

Tina’s struggle with tests started during autumn quarter and when our last interview took place during the spring her performance on tests continued to
In the following, I asked Tina to walk me through what she experienced when she took a test.

Ryan: And you sit down and they say put your stuff away and they hand out the test…

Tina: I get nervous.

Ryan: OK

Tina: And I’m like ok. Hopefully I looked over each section as much I should’ve. Is there gonna be more on this is there gonna be more on that and I’m doing the problems and then I’m like ok I have this answer and then I second guess myself and I’m like no maybe it’s this…so then I’m like down 50/50 and I just get to the point where I can’t decide and I just guess and pick one and then I leave out of the exam feeling like I think I did pretty good then I just get my answers online and I check over it because they give you the test booklet back and it doesn’t turn it out how I wanted it to turn out. And usually it’s all the questions that I have 50/50 on and I ended up guessing it’s usually the other answer that I didn’t pick.

Ryan: Wow!

Tina: And that upsets me….So….I should try not to get flustered. It doesn’t help when they’re up there at the front and you hear them erasing the board and they’re writing really big you’ve got 30 minutes remaining…you’ve got 20 minutes remaining and I’m like….I have no time is how I feel I have no time. A lot of the exams though there’s been a couple that I haven’t really got to finish on time. Not even necessarily me like half the class was still in there and they’re like time’s up and we’re like we still have like 5, 6 questions left to go so then you want to at least try to guess on them because…

Ryan: Its’ better than nothing else?

Tina: Right. I get flustered and frazzled and all that.

Ryan: It’s ok – lots of people do. Is it different from high school?
Tina: Oh yeah. I never studied in high school and tests and exams like they weren’t anything in high school – they weren’t anything in high school and I just I don’t know. It was never that much work in high school. Not even in the PSEO [post-secondary education opportunity] classes I did in high school did I have to we didn’t have to it wasn’t a big deal to show up to class or not because it was not like well if you miss class you’re missing something you learned like…I don’t know. It was not college. Definitely not college.

Ryan: Um…so then ok…so then you leave the test you know that things were rough, but you think you did ok, you get back and then what?

Tina: Ummm….after I check over the answers I’m upset because I felt like I put time and effort into it and I thought I did alright and then I’m wondering well what did I do wrong – maybe I didn’t study long enough maybe I didn’t look over as long as I should have maybe I shoulda went and got help for on this part because I didn’t really understand it but I was upset and then I’m like huh what if I did the same on the next one and the material is just getting harder as we go so … I’m kinda discouraged.

Ryan: How do you pick yourself up out of there?

Tina: I usually don’t…I try talking to people and I’m like I did horrible on that well everyone gets a bad grade here and there and they’re like oh you’re in chemistry that’s so hard but nobody has to take chemistry because everyone on my floor is a business major so I’m like yeah you just really don’t understand and …and it’s hard when everyone else is like my 3.0 whatever GPA and I’m like how about my 1.88…like…. it’s discouraging.

Ryan: Do you do anything different to get ready for the next test?

Tina: I mean…I don’t I don’t really know what there is to do different cuz I thought I did everything right I mean I studied I looked over the practice homework problems that they give us and like now we have these online tutorials I go through and I do those problems so. But that’s now I did better on my exams now before we didn’t have the online tutorials but we saw the homework practice problems but I looked over them and I mean …so but when I get that exam it’s like –
you didn’t learn anything – it’s all out the window. It’s not good …it’s not good.

Within this excerpt, Tina described her approach to test taking and the stress that had resulted. Tina described her ability to narrow her choices if she did not know the answer immediately. This was a good approach to take, but it didn’t work for her. She tried to use all the studying approaches that she could think of, but none of them worked for her. Noticeably absent from her description were models. She did not study with any peers and she did not consider learning how to study from anyone else. She did not consult her professor or her teaching assistants to learn how to better prepare for tests.

Without observing others, Zimmerman would argue that Tina would struggle with self-regulatory capacity for quite some time. Due to her economic circumstances, using a trial and error approach could cost Tina her scholarship, considerable debt, and extend her college career while also simultaneously delaying her ability to earn an income and start her career in the medical field. Although her test anxiety was unique, the other participants also described their academic challenges.

Table 2 provided a description of some of the struggles they faced. Whether it was Ross’ tendency to only exhibit self-regulated learning strategies when he was intrinsically motivated, or Carey’s struggle to more accurately appraise her ability to accomplish her goals, all of the students expressed some struggle. Even though the nature of these struggles was not necessarily caused by their social class position, in comparison with their wealthier peers, these
students would potentially experience a more severe impact due their social class status. In other words, students from lower economic backgrounds have more to risk when they enter college and need to develop self-regulated learning strategies as they progress through their courses.

The participants discussed their potential for engaging in self-regulated learning behaviors. They also had opportunities for development; they reported the use of strategies that were helping them achieve their goals. While they may not have had access to models, they did have the capacity to reflect on their performance, and consider alternative strategies. Although Tina continued to struggle, Jamie, Tracy, and Ross learned new strategies from their professors. Social class impacted their access to models who could have helped the participants gain new self-regulated learning techniques. Additionally, the time required to learn self-regulated learning through trial and error could have substantial impacts upon their current and future finances. Regardless, the participants were achieving their goals and their use of self-regulation continued to develop throughout their first year of college.

*Self-regulation and determination: perpetuating the meritocratic discourse*

What if determination is not enough? What if self-regulation does not lead to a future where one can achieve his/her goals? One possible explanation could be that the individual did not engage in self-regulation in the correct way. For example, I recommended that Tina was not exercising sophisticated strategies that would allow her to achieve her goals. However, there could be another possible explanation for why she has not been able to achieve her goals.
and this may have little to do with factors within Tina’s control. Similar to bell hooks, Tina could be trapped in a world that is bound by structural racism and classism (hooks, 2000).

Self-regulation works if we believe that the world is a place where we control our behavior. In a world where there may be things that are outside of the scope of our control, then self-regulation does not lead to a future where our goals can always be achieved. As Americans, we wish to believe that our hard work will lead towards success. The students in this current study articulated this belief. Other scholars have demonstrated similar findings (Aries & Seider, 2005, O'Dair, 2000, Stuber, 2006). We cling to a myth of meritocracy that prescribes through hard work, we can reach our goals. This myth blinds us from the other forces that may be at play.

As Ellen Brantlunger (2004) reported from her ethnography conducted in an American high school, she learned that the upper class participants in her study did not recognize the structural forces that impeded the poor from rising above their circumstances. Instead, they attributed lack of success to personal characteristics that impede their ascension to the middle class. One of the wealthy participants in her study, talked about her peers stating:

[They] are poor…most live on the Hill…it’s the slums. [They] smoke, do drugs, dress grungy. They have those hick accents. I think they usually get bad grades. They don’t like school, so I think they drop out a lot. They don’t really fit in (Bratlinger, 2004, pp. 109-110).

The participants in my research were those poor peers and they worked hard to belong in school so they would not be characterized in that way. They
realized that the way to get ahead in high school was through self-regulation. They were hoping that, through determination, they could do the same in college. Recognizing that there may be structural forces at play requires one to consider the possibility that the future may be not necessarily be in his/her control. Yet not having a role model may be the very example of a structural impediment that inhibits students from acquiring self-regulation. Parents divorce, mental illness, death, are all examples of things that can inhibit one’s progress and continue to be out of one’s control. Self-regulation ignores the systems of power that may be at play within our institutions. Recognizing these systems in conjunction with self-regulation may be the true lesson that the participants like Tina need to learn to see in order to make it in a unequal and harsh world that privileges some and oppresses others based on appearance, gender, and income.

Conclusion

Exploring the intersection of social class, identity and self-regulation has led me to the creation of a new space. As the participants made meaning of these three aspects of their lives, they taught me about determination. However, they also taught me about how they were empowered by their social class, how they wrestled and tried new identities as part of their present- and future-self, and how they worked to develop self-regulation despite their lack of models available in their lives.

The transition to college taught them about their priorities, caused almost all of them to fear losing their scholarships, and emblazoned their resolve and
self-reliant spirit. Over the course of the year, the participants changed and
grew. As we saw with Carey, her self-awareness developed and as a result, she
changed her major. With Jamie, she grew in her ability to engage with her peers
in social situations. Tracy talked about how she now makes decisions for herself
rather than others. And I saw Ross’ career convictions solidify over the course of
his career. Their peers who came from wealthy and middle class families most
likely experienced similar transitions. At many points I was left wondering, “What
makes you different?” At the end of the day, they did not see their differences as
something that should get in their way of achieving their goals. Rather they
maintained their focus, relied on their family members for support, and worked
hard towards the achievement of their goals. They were different in their resolve
and their willingness to engage in trial and error in order to achieve success.
CHAPTER 5

Implications and Future Directions

What did this research contribute to theory, practice, and research methods? Considering what was found and created by examining the intersections of social class, identity, and self-regulated learning for adolescents as they experienced transition builds upon our existing knowledge base regarding content, theory, and practice.

Substantive Contributions

Economic conditions and the relevance of social class

When I began this project, the economy was thriving. Unemployment was shrinking, consumer spending was high and credit was flowing freely in global markets. As the project has ended, the economic climate changed. Unemployment continues to grow, the price of gas and oil was at historic highs, world governments needed to bail out investment giants (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/03/business/economy/03econ.html?_r=1&scp=5&sq=2007%20economy&st=cse).

The change in the economic climate has made more people aware of the impact of our economy on day-to-day living. Asking people about social class today would be different than asking them just a few months prior. Regardless of these changes, the participants’ insights regarding their own social class
backgrounds contributed to how they understood social class during this snapshot of economic transition. Extrapolating from their view, it was possible to see how this work sheds light onto the greater understanding of social class within the contemporary American culture.

*Implications for what it means to be “middle class”*

Their initial perceptions that the participants’ families were middle class demonstrated the way that many Americans think. Americans aspire to find ourselves as part of the average; we want to be “normal.” In terms of social class, normal is middle class (Aries & Seider, 2005; Stuber, 2006, Lawler, 2005). This pervasiveness to be normal pushes our view of social class to the extremes.

The participants defined the wealthy as those who lived in luxury and the poor as those who were homeless. While all of the participants came from relatively poor families in order to be eligible for the scholarship, they defined their families based on a normative standard of what they perceived it meant to be middle class. Stuber (2006) and Lawler (2005) reported similar findings in their research.

In Stuber’s work, she discusses how students only talked about social class of those who were wealthier and how they never mentioned anyone who was poor in her interviews. Lawler (2005) also describes how the middle class disgust for the poor constructs their aspirations. Their self definitions seem representative of a larger American understanding of social class and this builds upon the work of previous research.
Resisting and confirming habitus

Bourdieu argued that social class defined habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). And through habitus we acknowledge the social class position of others. The participants challenged this notion and their behaviors and beliefs argued that habitus can and does change. The change in habitus may take time, effort, and mistakes, but through determination, the new social expectations that accompany a different class status can be adopted and social class status consequentially changes. The participants resisted Bourdieu’s beliefs about social class through their own lives, yet they recognized that his theory may hold truth for others who lived in their communities. As they discussed how poverty perpetuated itself, they confirmed Bourdieu’s theory and research. Yet this observation did not pertain to their own lives. Their identity was not positioned in relation to their social class, but rather by their belief in their goals, career aspirations, and self-reliance.

Identity

Through this sense of determination and disregard for the role that social class played in their future lives, the participants added to our understanding of identity. The timeless search for who we are as compared to others and as influenced by the social and cultural contexts where we live has been a question that psychologists and humans have wrestled with for hundreds of years (Kroger, 2004). The participants shared in this process as they negotiated the meaning of their identity. Specifically, they allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of what it meant to be an 18 year old who came from a poor family, had earned
academic achievements in high school, and had goals that often times transcended all other family members. The participants’ allowed me to map Kegan’s developmental theory onto social class awareness. This theoretical contribution provided insight both into Kegan’s work and into the development of identity for the participants. The findings also contribute to our understanding of how identity is negotiated in terms of the participants’ working class origins, their transition to being middle class, and the negotiation of how behavior both reflects and simultaneously constructs identity. Prior to discussing the various ways participants contributed to how identity is negotiated, let us first consider the contributions of linking Kegan and social class.

*Applying Kegan’s identity development model to social class*

The research also contributed to the ways in which Kegan’s theory of identity development mapped onto the acquisition and development of social class identity. To my knowledge, this is the first study where Kegan was used as a lens to see how development takes place regarding one’s social class identity. Through this research, I conceptualized how consciousness looked as it related to the phases of Kegan’s theory and in relationship to how social class contributed to identity for these participants. While more work needs to be done to provide a more in-depth and thorough understanding of how consciousness develops regarding social class identity, this research provided an initial glimpse into the ways in which these participants discussed social class and how their meaning-making process mapped onto the phases of consciousness presented
within Kegan’s theory. Through the phases of consciousness, the research contributed to our knowledge of how social class identity develops as a function of one’s goals, one’s relationships, and eventually one’s institutional affiliations. The other contribution that needs further consideration is Kegan’s premise that development is negotiated through loss and gain. We negotiate and grow as we accept loss and balance it with the gains that we experience throughout life. Here a connection can be made with bereavement literature. Mourning the passing of a loved one requires the negotiation of loss. This literature source has rarely been considered as an aspect of how identity development during adolescences and young adulthood can be better understood. This is a future direction that I would like to pursue as I familiarize myself even more with Kegan’s work and consider investigating the role that balancing loss and gain has on development of our sense of self.

The research applied the development model of identity to the specific context of social class. Through this application, participants shared several ways that they negotiate their sense of self. These negotiations provided further contributions to our understanding of identity.

_Negotiating identity: Working class origins and academic aspirations_

When the participants faced difficulty relative to their current identity as students, and consequentially their future professional selves, I saw the influential role that family played in preserving the current sense of self striving towards those future goals. While it has been previously documented that
parents and family contribute to negotiating identity (citation), the evidence from this research demonstrated a fundamental shift for these children who come from working class families. Previously, the family would have thought the child was “uppity” if he/she pursued a college education. They would not have valued a college education as a means to a better life (Lubrano, 2004). The child would have to negotiate pride and shame as they reconciled who they were when they were at college and who they were when they were with family members. Within this research, we saw family members who were supportive of the child’s goal to earn a college education. The family preserved the participant’s current self and promoted the development of a future identity that aligned with the adolescent’s dreams and goals. The socio-cultural context has shifted and this research contributed to helping us see that shift. The other shift relative to identity was gaining a glimpse into the process by which poor adolescents identify and adopt middle and upper class expectations and behaviors.

*Negotiating Identities: The transition to middle class*

This research also provided insight into an ongoing process whereby the participants have started to recognize the middle class norms and expectations that guide behavior in the academic and white collar world. Whether it's attempting to identify vaguely defined expectations related to academic work or gaining the pre-professional experiences like internships that land future careers, the participants were actively engaged in the behaviors that started to allow them to blend and belong in a middle class world. Their goals led them towards this
middle class world. Whether it was the pervasive perception that everyone was part of the middle class, or a notion that a middle class identity is their future self, the participants’ current identities were developing along a trajectory that would lead to a future self defined by the middle class incomes, educations, and implicit standards that they began to develop during their first year of college.

Although bell hooks described a similar process that she needed to adopt, she described it as a means of survival. For hooks, identifying the expectations and adopting them as part of her sense of self was a rigorous and difficult challenge. While the participants talked about their struggles, they also seemed to have an implicit sense of how to transition to the middle class. The differences between hooks’ experiences and the participants in this research could be attributed to several factors. Race, less rigid class boundaries, recognition of a college education as a means to wealth, and the expansion of information and media could all play a role in how the participants knew what they wanted to accomplish. Those factors that contribute to their goals need to be further explored. The research provided a glimpse into how this transition to the middle class began for these adolescents and possibly how this may be an easier transition process for all those who come from a lower income background.

_Negotiating Identity: Behavior reflecting and constructing who we are_

As I investigated identity, I began to see how one’s goals and behaviors aided in the construction and negotiation of identity. By recognizing the relationship between goals, behaviors, and identity, I began to see the connectedness
between identity and self-regulation. What does it mean, then if our sense of self is connected to our behavior? If our access to strategies is influenced by our economic situation, I saw in the participants that they were both constrained and motivated by their economic circumstances. While they may have had to develop self-regulatory skills, their core sense of identity that was fueled by determination neither restricted nor clouded their ambition with doubt. Their goals and desire to achieve reflected both their identity and their self-regulatory capacity.

**Self-regulation**

The current research expanded theoretical knowledge to include how economic background influenced students’ development of self-regulation as well as how they reported using different self-regulated approaches during their first year of college.

**Developing self-regulation: observing models**

Specifically, this study contributed to our understanding of the potential role that access to models may play for students who come from a poor background. Zimmerman proposed a model of self-regulatory development that hinges upon access to observation in the acquisition of regulatory skills (2001). For nearly all of the participants in this study, their economic position limited their access to models, which made it difficult to observe the study skills and career related skills that they would need to use during their first year of college.
By having access to academic models to observe and acquire regulatory skills for college course work, the participants may have experienced less of a struggle during their first year of college. These types of models provide accurate knowledge to better anticipate academic demands. If the participants had the opportunity to observe these models, they may have gained a repertoire of strategies that could be used to more accurately identify academic expectations, anticipate the volume of work, and create a system to effectively manage deadlines.

Middle and upper class peers are more likely to have access to family members and friends who provide them with more accurate knowledge of the university content, expectations about grading and evaluation standards, and can direct them as they register for courses. Access to models provides knowledge about the demands and expectations of specific academic majors and sometimes even specific instructors. A few times during her interviews, Tracy talked about how her peers did not seem to study as often or put forth as much effort as she did. Perhaps they did not need to put forth as much effort and time because they had access to models that gave them an advantage. Perhaps they had models who helped them to develop more accurate appraisals of task demands and maybe they had already acquired a set of various strategies they could implement that would lead to success. The relationship between economics and the development and use of self-regulation needs to be further investigated. Important from this study, was the recognition that economics has
a relationship to access to models. This access to models provides opportunities
to develop self-regulation for academic tasks.

_The costs of self-regulation as academic cultural capital_

Related to this was the notion the acquisition of self-regulatory skill as a
form of academic cultural capital. Similar to cash, academic cultural capital can
be used to advance one’s goals. However, if you do not have money to make a
purchase, then you either borrow or earn it. Similarly, academic cultural capital
must be earned. The participants in this research showed that they earned their
academic cultural capital through trial and error. Changing majors, re-taking
courses, or having to attend a community college to supplement your course
work, adds to the overall expense of a college degree. Typically, students who
come from poor backgrounds acquire more and more debt in this process. Using
trial and error as the acquisition process to regulatory skills is costly, both in
terms of money and time. The development of academic cultural capital can also
impact identity.

_Self-regulation and identity: The intersection of behavior and self_

Zimmerman’s model of self-regulation demonstrates that performance
leads to reflection which leads to goals in a consequential and cyclical manner
(2001). Behavior is also indicative of our identity. A mother cares for her
children. An educator teaches. A chef cooks. If a mother cooks, that also
makes her a chef. If this woman cares for her children by getting them ready for
their day, teaches math at a school and then returns home to cook dinner for her
family, then her behaviors define her as a mother, teacher, and chef. The connection is similar between self-regulation and identity.

As identity is constructed, behaviors ensue relative to this construction of who we are. Our ability to perform those behaviors successfully leads to the development or denial of identity. In the research Tina studied science and medical technology. To construct her identity in the medical profession and as a student, she took chemistry course work and consistently struggled throughout the year. Tina’s struggle contributed to how she made meaning of her identity as a student and her identity in the medical profession. Tina was determined to be successful; however, the struggle that she faced indicated that it would take considerable effort and time to re-take courses and work toward her goals.

To achieve her goals, Tina needed to develop her self-regulatory capacity. This is one example of how the research illustrated the cost of what it may take for a student like Tina to acquire those skills that lead to her success. Her economic situation did not allow her to develop these strategies earlier and now they may have greater impacts in terms of the cost of her college education, her potential future income, and her very identity as a student and as a medical professional.

The link between self-regulation and identity most likely exists for all adolescents; however the time it takes for the development of sophisticated self-regulatory skills is connected to economic position. Regardless of economic position, development can still take place, but what costs are incurred during the acquisition of these regulatory skills? This relationship needs further
investigation to see if these patterns exist for middle and upper-class students. The substantive contributions from this project offer important additions to knowledge regarding social class, identity, and self-regulated learning. The research also offers practical contributions that can be used by educators and students.

*Implications of a determined self – distinctions between identity and motivation*

Based upon the findings in this research, determination is a construct that is incorporated into the core sense of self. While determination impacts motivation, it operates on a more global level. In other words, determination influences one’s belief in their capacity to accomplish goals. Differing from self-efficacy that pertains to one’s ability to accomplish a specific task, determination is one’s capacity to accomplish general goals. While self-esteem pertains to a global belief system, determination is similar, yet pertains to a notion that one can accomplish something. Determination is based upon volition, yet it is more than just a desire to accomplish something, it is the capacity to actually act upon that desire and fulfill that goal.

The participants in this research articulated a determined sense of self that enabled them to achieve their goals. In addition, their determination influenced how they interpreted others’ behavior or apathy. They believed that through determination they could achieve their goals and that those who do not achieve their goals are not determined enough. They did not recognize any potential impediments, such as illness or divorce, that may slow or deter their determination and related goals.
Determination, for the participants in this research operated similarly to a paradigm. Through the lens of determination, the participants analyzed their own behavior, success, and failure as well as others. Their determination is represented by the following, “If I am determined, then I will behave in ways that allow me to achieve my goals”. While this is not a direct quotation from any of the participants, it is representative of their descriptions throughout their interviews.

Ryan and Deci’s (2002) description of self-determination rests on a human need to feel autonomous and have the capacity to direct our behavior. Self-determination is a means to direct behavior in ways that fulfill needs, goals, and desires. Ryan and Deci (2002) frame self-determination as a motivational construct and relate self-determination to the human needs of competency, belongingness, and autonomy. In 2006, Ryan and Deci discussed autonomy in greater depth and traced the history of autonomy to philosophical origin where motivation and identity intersect. They comment upon the discussion of phenomenology and its relationship to autonomy. In this discussion Ryan and Deci (2006) write, “In Pfander’s analysis, acts of will are exclusively those experienced ‘precisely not as an occurrence caused by a different agent but as an initial act of the ego-center itself’ (p. 20)” (p. 1560). While Ryan and Deci have focused on autonomy as an individual’s freedom to act upon his/her own will, Pfander’s discussion connects autonomy to identity and places it within the core of identity found in the ego.
This seems to be a way in which determination, as discussed by the students who participated in this research study, aligns with self-determination as defined by Ryan and Deci. Autonomy, if truly owned by the individual and acted upon out of free will must originate from somewhere. For the participants in this research, the origin rests in their very identity. Self-determination differs in that it directs behavior relative to choice and free will. In this way, determination and self-determination interact in a way that intersects motivation and identity. The theoretical and empirical study of the intersection of determination as a component of identity, self-determination and self-regulation as components of motivation warrant further study.

If we concede that determination is a component of identity, and this aspect of identity seems detrimental to one’s well-being, then how do educators and counselors trouble determination without injuring the individual’s sense of self? This is a complicated question that would require careful consideration regarding the individual who needs help and guidance.

The goal is to offer assistance without jeopardizing the person’s identity. To do this successfully, a general approach would require three strategies that involve troubling cognition, motivation, and behavior. In this hypothetical situation, let us assume that a student like Tracy has articulated her goal to graduate in two years and has run into difficulty accomplishing this goal. Tracy’s inability to graduate in this timeframe threatens her very identity as a determined person.
To help Tracy in this regard, I would first try to work with her cognition by helping her to examine other examples, or models, of students who have been successful and graduated in more than two years. While this would not initially help Tracy in her own sense of self and the consequences of not accomplishing her goals, she would be able to recognize that her peers have been successful when not having achieved the same goal. The goal with this approach would be to teach that her life is not doomed by not achieving this accomplishment.

Secondly, would be to ask Tracy about her motivation for this goal. What are the real consequences she would experience by not achieving this aspiration? Exploring this and what the goal means in terms of her competence would be important. Acknowledging other rigorous goals that she has accomplished previously would also be important.

Lastly, the focus of this conversation would be to address Tracy’s behaviors relative to this goal. What has she done that has contributed to this achievement and what behaviors have gotten in the way of achieving this goal? Asking Tracy to focus on the behaviors helps to distinguish a separation between identity and behavior. While determination may be a part of her identity and her behaviors are related to this, making a distinction between the two is important when helping her to see that her identity is not “wrong” in this instance.
Practical Contributions

Who are the stakeholders?

Using knowledge in the day to day practice of education is a core component necessary to improve teaching and learning and remains a core value of my own identity as an educator and researcher. The research offers insights that can be used by educators working and teaching at high schools and colleges. I use the term educator in its broadest sense to include all those who practice teaching in its diverse pedagogical forms.

Within this definition, I include Guidance Counselors who educate students about self-awareness, career opportunities, and, related to this research, the college application process. I also consider the administrative staff at colleges and universities to be educators. Admissions counselors, financial aid advisors, academic advisors, residence hall directors, and the many other staff at a university educate students about a range of topics including scholarships, academic integrity, goal setting, conflict resolution as well as how to gain awareness of diversity in the world. From the more traditional definition of educator, I also include high school teachers and college faculty as educators. All of these stakeholders may come into contact with students who are similar to those who participated in this research. Regardless of a student’s social class background, it is important for educators in all schools and educational contexts to think about social class and how this may have helped or hindered the student’s academic and psycho-social development.
Students themselves may benefit from the practical contributions offered by this research as well. The lessons learned and shared by the participants offer potential models for their peers. While some of the struggles and successes experienced by the participants are unique to them, others are part of a more universal experience that accompanies starting college. The implications for students offered here are preliminary. They need to be shared with the participants from this study in order to confirm their validity. Most importantly, the implications for students need to be framed in the language and experiences of what it means to be an 18 year old first year college student. While I could attempt this endeavor, I humbly admit that I would benefit greatly from the assistance of the participants who contributed to this research. Before sharing the practical contributions for students, let me illustrate what the research offers educational stakeholders.

**Educators**

Because the research followed the students as they moved from high school to college, the discussion of practical contributions for stakeholders follows the same progression.

**High school teachers**

Through the interviews with the participants, it was evident that they were not prepared for the rigorous demands of college? While some of their lack of preparation may be attributed to their schools residing in poor school districts, lack of rigorous demands from high school teachers may be another contributing
factor. It is not easy for high school teachers to be more demanding in terms of
the volume or the quality of work that they expect from students. However, in
order to prepare students for what they will face in college, high school teachers
need to demand more, learn about the quality standards that college professors
use, and start to introduce students to syllabi and similar tools used in the college
setting. If this is not done, then high school students will continue to be
unprepared for college.

One strategy high school teachers could use would involve phasing out
reminders related to assignment due dates. The participants discussed this as
an initial difference many of them noticed between their high school and
collegiate experiences. This is one small step high school teachers could take to
start to better prepare college bound students.

High school guidance counselors

Preparing high school students to even gain entry into college can be
challenging when the school’s student population mainly consists of first
generation college students. In these instances, neither parents nor students are
familiar with application processes and financial aid eligibility. Tracy’s guidance
counselor walked her through the whole process starting with college choice and
saw her through to completing the financial aid applications as well. Usually
there are no other models for these students and so guidance counselors play a
particularly important role when working with students like Tracy.
Another dimension to the guidance counselor’s role is career preparation. Debbie shared an example where she was able to meet a professional who worked in non-profit management. Opportunities to have access to career models are pivotal for students to make informed decisions regarding potential career options and related credentials. The participants in this research did not have access to these types of models. Their high schools could have given them greater access that would have helped better prepare them for college.

*College Admissions Officers*

Admissions officers also need to think about how to better prepare students for the academic demands they will experience when arriving on campus. While the admissions staff can be considered the sales staff who sell the university to the prospective student, there is an ethical obligation to present a realistic picture of life on campus both in the classroom and outside of it. Providing a sample student week that includes time in class and time studying could be instrumental to help students better calibrate what will be expected of them. These types of examples need to be reinforced during orientation as well.

*College Faculty*

College faculty members can gain insight from this research by recognizing that not all students learned how to study while in high school. Tracy offered an example of how her professor provided time management resources and Jamie’s psychology class gave her some study strategies that she used. Even though it seems this was happening for some students, the recognition
needs to be shared across the board so faculty can model effective studying techniques and strategies for students.

For example, professors can proactively discuss their expectations regarding quality work. Sharing clear expectations regarding the expectations for different performance levels helps students to analyze the task, appraise their performance and identify the gaps when they do not necessarily achieve their goals. While the students need to own their portion of the learning process, professors can scaffold this experience in a meaningful and manageable way for students.

Additionally, professors can provide feedback that allows the participants to more accurately appraise their performance. When I asked the students about their performance on exams, they could not articulate what happened. On occasion they knew the content that they missed or they blamed the grading scheme; however, they consistently did not understand why they were earning the grades they received.

Students

While this research supports the variety of ways that faculty and staff can support students, the findings also have implications for the students as well. Primarily, the students who participated could have benefited from being better “consumers.” They need to seek out information regarding the requirements of courses, majors, and professions. Tina had a vision to work in the medical field, but it did not seem evident that she had really thought through the smaller steps
she would need to take to achieve that long-term goal. By reflecting on a variety of questions, students could avoid some issues later. Some questions to consider may include why do you want that career, what is involved in getting there, what does the day to day work look like? Spending some time in advance may prevent struggles later on. By engaging in this process of reflective thought, students could seek out models if they do not have access to them. This would be a means to use initiative to get access to the resources not otherwise available.

A similar approach could be done with courses and academic assignments. Taking some time to record the strategies that students are using and how effective those strategies are relative to grades could help them as they advance through their course work. If this seems to involve too much effort, the students who participated in the research benefited whenever they talked about going to their professors for help. When they talked to their professors, it gave them access to a model they could learn from.

The big question that the participants could have benefited from was asking themselves was, “If you don’t do something now, how will this affect you tomorrow? Although almost all of the participants could benefit from engaging in this forethought, not doing so seemed to hurt Tina the most. She had to re-take a course and pay for it at a community college. Even though she may have a more effective learning experience in the end, it seemed like she could have prevented this if she had opened her book earlier and really thought through what it would mean if she was not studying on a regular basis.
Methodological Contributions

In terms of qualitative methods, the research followed a more traditional trajectory in its execution. However, there were some contributions related to the use of blogs, measuring self-regulated learning, methods to assist in the discussion of social class, and the use of tables as a tool for data analysis.

Artifacts used while interviewing

One methodological implication was the use of cultural tools or artifacts to prompt discussion during the interviews. Specifically, I used the students’ academic transcripts to discuss self-regulated learning and I adapted a table to prompt discussion pertaining to social class (see Appendix B for specific examples).

The academic transcript provided feedback data that both of us could reference throughout the interview. This shared starting point, allowed me to ask specific questions regarding the participant’s courses and it also gave them anchors that they could refer to throughout the course of the interviews. The table describing general characteristics of different social class groups served a similar purpose.

The table gave us a common way to define and discuss social class. It was important that I did not introduce this too early though. One of the aims of the study was to ascertain what knowledge they had related to social class. By sharing the table with the participants during the final interview, we could build upon previously discussed topics with a new, common language. The drawback
of using the table was that it confined some of their understandings of social class (Appendix E contains iterations of data tables).

**Using tables for data analysis**

I relied upon tables to organize my data. I started to create data tables after the first interview and used them throughout the project. The tables were both an organizational tool to use as a quick reference, but they also prompted cohesive analysis which was important within an identity-related data analyses. Through the tables, I could begin to see patterns emerge from within participant's data as well as across the data and the passes made through the transcripts.

**In pursuit of a hybrid paradigm**

When I originally conceived this research, I drew from two theoretical paradigms: constructivist theory and critical theory. Research conducted in Educational psychology has typically used more constructivist methods when analyzing data and reporting results (citations here). Although educational psychology has critiqued accepted teaching practice and research methods, research typically reported in major journals such as *Educational Psychology* take an approach that the world is knowable without necessarily explicitly recognizing networks of power that circulate within hegemonic discourses.

Critical theory has not been as widespread in educational psychology research. As a result, I found myself using constructivist means to analyze data and arrive at my findings. Yet at the critical theory informed my initial thoughts about how power was an important aspect of social class and the way it operates
within our society. What would this research look like if I had employed a critical theory lens as an equal contributor?

*Critical theory.*

Inherent in critical theory is analysis of the ways in which power operates. When interviewing participants, I would have investigated the ways they understood power in relationship to social class (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). This could have been as explicit as asking them that very question or it could have evolved as part of the study. For example, when they talked about the cycle of poverty, I could have asked how they understand that in relationship to power. Who does that cycle benefit? What standards does a cycle of poverty ensure? Who is disempowered by this cycle? Asking the participants about these types of questions would have given different data and focused on a more societal perspective of social class. The focus of this research was primarily on the individual. Looking at networks of power and how those are perceived by individuals would take the analysis to a societal level. Considering how the participants made meaning of their own lives in relationship to their perceptions of the society would have been an interesting way to mesh constructivism and critical theory.

Within a power analysis, critical theory calls upon researchers to examine hegemony. Researchers must attempt to see the pervasive and encompassing discourses that surround and embody the participants and the larger society in which they live. This is a challenging endeavor involving methods such as critical discourse analysis, Foucauldian analysis, and employs other sources of material
culture to look at the broader scope of what shapes behavior, language, and perceptions (Kimberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). While my constructivist interpretation of the data accepted what the participants said as “truth,” a critical theory analysis of the data would look beneath and within their language to try and see how larger discourses may have informed the ways in which the participants constructed knowledge. This may have even included disempowering social class as the foundation of the research. What does the work mean if social class truly is a collection of stereotypes that do not have meaning in society? Examining this question troubles the intersection on which the research questions, design and analysis were built, yet through the doubt created by the possibility that social class is insignificant, it frees us to think about what else is going on within the data and with how the participants made meaning of my questions.

While this analysis was beyond the scope of this project, it seems as though I have uncovered two diametrically opposed paradigms that contest the knowledge created within each framework. I am left with the challenge of how to bridge these seemingly opposite paradigmatic perspectives. Even though most of my training has originated from constructivism, I see the world through networks of power. When we recognize these networks of power and start to make the invisible visible, a different aspect of truth is discovered. I aspire to do this in tandem with my constructivist orientation; however, this requires more thought, engagement, and practice. While I did begin to recognize how my position of privilege influenced my data analysis, this was merely an initial step to
further work that needs to consider broader issues of power involved in how meaning is constructed. I need to create a hybrid space that combines constructivism with critical theory.

*Research as praxis.*

Throughout the course of this research, I also discovered my orientation toward research as praxis. With my previous professional experience in student affairs administration, I probably should have recognized that my orientation toward helping students would also surface in my research. Yet it wasn’t until I was sitting in the interview with Tina and listening to her struggles with test anxiety that this orientation slapped me in the face. It was like a reflex as I launched into giving her advice about where she could get help with this challenge. After the interview was over and I was driving home, I questioned if I had stepped over an ethical boundary as a researcher. Instead I decided it would have been an ethical infraction if I had not given her some advice. As a result of the work, I also feel a compulsion to contact the Land Grant Opportunity Scholarship program and offer to facilitate a presentation based on the work. My goal here would not to impart some wisdom, but rather to open a dialogue with other students in the program, share what I learned from students and talk about how that could possibly relate to their lives and current circumstances.
As the research has come to a close, I have discovered that I have presented myself as a constructivist, yet I need to push myself to integrate critical theory within this analysis. Creating this hybrid space that intersects constructivism and critical theory will most likely be a life-long journey, just as reconciling social class, identity, and self-regulation will be for the participants in the study.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Consent Materials.

Overview of research

Title:
Exploring the Intersections of Social Class, Identity, and Self-regulated Learning among Emerging Adults

Overview:
The purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of how emerging adults (18-25) experience the transition from high school to college. Specifically, issues of social class, identity, and self-regulated learning strategies will be studied.

Research Questions:
How do adolescents from different socioeconomic backgrounds experience the transition to college?
How do emerging adults (18-25) understand and describe their social class background?
How does social class background influences the use of self-regulated learning strategies (goal setting, monitoring performance, and actively reflecting on performance)?

Methods:
The study will involve qualitative methods. Research participants will be asked to be observed in classrooms, participate in five recorded interviews, and write down their thoughts in blogs or paper journals.

Participation in the research will begin in July/August 2007 and will concluding in February 2008.

Expected Outcomes:
This study is being designed to better understand identity and motivation. The context of the study is how students experience the transition to college. The results could benefit high school guidance counselors, college admissions staff, as well as other faculty and administrators concerned with access to college and how students navigate this transition process.

Questions? Please contact Ryan Poirier at 614-783-1771 poirier.14@osu.edu or Dr. Heather A. Davis at 614-282-7430; davis.2087@osu.edu.
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Exploring the Intersections of Social Class, Identity, and Self-regulated Learning among Emerging Adults

Researcher: Ryan R. Poirier, M.A.; Heather A. Davis, Ph.D.

Sponsor: OSU Alumni Grant for Graduate Student Research

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to get an understanding of how your socioeconomic background influences your transition to college.
Procedures/Tasks: Over the course of the next nine months, you will be asked to participate in about 5 interviews that will last between one and and 1 ½ hours each. All interviews will be recorded using an audio recording device. In addition you will be asked to write down your thoughts by either using a paper journal or an electronic web log (blog).

Duration: The research will take place over the course of the next nine months. Each interview will take about 1 – 1 ½ hours and writing down your thoughts will take about 20 minutes. Over the course of the nine month period, participation in the study will be about 9 hours.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with this project. You will be asked to think about your experience as you make the transition from high school to college. You will also be asked to discuss your thoughts about social class in general as well as your own social class background. This may include discussing issues like family income, employment, and educational achievement. Talking about these issues may cause some stress. It is not expected that this will be stressful. However, if you were to feel stress related to answering these
questions, you will be able to stop answering at any time without consequence. In addition, a staff member from your high school guidance staff or your new college/university counseling staff will be contacted if you wish to speak with someone.

In the event that I am required by law, your confidentiality may be broken as part of this project. In this situation, information will only be shared with those people who have legal authority to gain access to this information.

Having the opportunity to talk to someone about your experience from high school to college may prove beneficial to you. Talking about what is going on may help you understand that experience better. Also, this research has the potential to benefit high school guidance counselors and admissions staff from colleges and universities.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):
Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;

The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;

The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives: As a thank you for your participation you will receive a $10 gift card to a book store like Barnes & Noble or Amazon.com at the beginning of each interview.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be
acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Ryan R. Poirier at 614-783-1771 or by e-mailing Poirier.14@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Ryan R. Poirier at 614-783-1771 or e-mailing Poirier.14@osu.edu.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

AM/PM

Date and time

Phone Number

E-mail Address

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Thank you for providing your contact information above.
Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature of person obtaining consent

AM/PM

Date and time
Dear STUDENT NAME:

Thank you once again for expressing interest in participating in this study. I really appreciate your willingness to be involved in this project. Enclosed you will find a copy of the consent form along with a stamped envelope so that you may return it to me.

If you could please put your signed copy in the mail by Thursday, August 23rd, I would appreciate it. Once I have all the signed consent forms and I have a real good sense of how many people want to participate, I will randomly select the participants and then I will be in touch. My goal is to let you know during the week of Labor Day (September 3-7).
If at any point you have questions regarding the study or your participation please contact me and let me know. You may either send me an e-mail at Poirier.14@osu.edu or call me at 614-783-1771.

Thank you once again for your participation. I wish you the best as you get ready for your first days as a Buckeye!

Sincerely,

Ryan Poirier
APPENDIX B

Audit Trail and Interview Questions

Audit Trail

This qualitative exploration of social class, identity, and self-regulated learning took place over the course of one academic year. Interviews were the primary means for data collection. Participants also provided written reflection; however, these were not included in the final data analysis. This research employed constructivist grounded theory to inform the methods and subsequent analyses.

Sampling

In the original design, I proposed to study both upper middle class students and working poor students to better understand social class by seeing the contrasts between the two groups. I learned that there were two major challenges with this design. The primary challenge was not planning adequate time between when the proposal was submitted to the institutional review board and when I would need to begin to get permission to conduct research and recruit students from the two high schools..
The original study was designed to collect data during the last semester of high school and over the entire first year of college. The high school portion would involve observations and I would recruit the participants based on the class observations. Although I was granted permission to sample from a high school in an upper middle class community, the working class school district would not give me access to recruit students. I then attempted to gain access to a second working class school district. Fearing that I would either run out of time or be denied access again, I also contacted Ohio State University to see if there was a possibility of sampling from the Land Grant Opportunity Scholars program. Although sampling from this group would change the study and only allow me to focus on one social class group, the primary research questions would remain intact. The other key change was that all of the students would inherently be high academic achievers just by the fact that they earned the scholarship. However, the key issue was timing. In order to study transition, I had to talk to the students before their first year of college began. Although the second working class school district did give me permission to recruit students, it was too late to get the graduating seniors before they began college. With the issue of time, I had no choice but to recruit from the LGOS group.

I contacted all 84 of the incoming LGOS students via e-mail and asked if they would be interested in the study. 17 out of the 84 expressed interest. I mailed consent forms and another more detailed explanation of the study to these 17 students. Out of the 17, only seven returned signed consent forms by the deadline so I could interview them before they started classes at OSU. Out
of the seven, there was only one male who returned his consent form. I sent a
follow up e-mail to the males who had expressed initial interest and was
unsuccessful in getting any of them to return signed consent forms in order to
interview them prior to the start of the school year.

Data Collection

Six of the seven research participants participated in four interviews. One
participant withdrew before completing the final interview. Data collected in the
previous three interviews were analyzed and included in the findings. The first
interview focused on getting to know the participants, explaining the research,
and learning about their expectations of college. The second interview focused
on social class. The third interview pertained to academic experiences and the
development and use of self-regulated learning and the final interview
synthesized social class, self-regulated learning, identity and the overall
transition to college life.

In addition to conducting four interviews with each participant, I also asked
participants to complete reflective journal. My original idea was to have each of
the participants maintain a web log (blog) where they could record their thoughts
to my prompts. Only one of the participants started the blog. The others replied
to me either through written notes or e-mail. I e-mailed the participants with a
prompt following the interviews so I could capture any additional thoughts they
had regarding the interview topics. I primarily used their reflections in
preparation for the next interview. I did not include them as part of the data
analysis for the project. Several of the participants did not consistently submit
the reflections and so it was not a consistent among all participants. Participants were asked to respond to prompts. Due to the inconsistency from participants in responding to these prompts, they were not used in the final data analysis.

Interview One.

Because of all the sampling changes and the beginning of classes quickly approaching at OSU, I needed to get the first interviews scheduled done quickly. In order to accomplish this goal, the first interview was a phone interview and I wrote notes while I spoke with each participant. The goal of the first interview was to establish contact, describe their participation in the research, and start to get to know the participants. The questions focused on their high school experiences and touched upon what they anticipated college would be like. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. Immediately following interview one, I typed my notes so I could get a better description of the conversation.

Initial data analysis and transcription (interview questions for all interviews are found within this appendix).

To begin data analysis, I started to write student profiles following each interview. I created a table that captured the major points from each participant in each interview. I continued to elaborate on this table as I progressed through the interviews. I also kept a record of data memos. Some of these were audio memos and others were e-mails between me and Dr. Davis. The memos were incredibly helpful to plan for the upcoming interviews. My original plan was that I would most likely be transcribing all of my own interviews. With my work schedule, this was not going to allow me to stay on top of the data and maintain
my pace with the interviews. Through a network of graduate student colleagues I
found a transcriptionist who was willing to work for me. Luckily this happened
just as I was finishing interview two.

Interview two.

The focus of interview two was social class. It was important to get an
understanding of what the students knew about social class before too much
time had passed at OSU. But I also wanted them to have experienced enough of
college life so they could start to make some initial comparisons between home
and the university. After the first week of class, I e-mailed all the participants and
started to schedule interview two. Interview two was conducted during the fourth,
fifth, and sixth weeks of the quarter. All of the interviews were recorded using a
digital audio recorder. Immediately following the interview, I continued to write
data memos and continue with the data table that I had begun after interview
one.

Unanticipated topics.

During the first meeting as part of interview two, one student started
talking about her budgeting skills. This included how she manages money for
expenses and what she buys. I had not originally thought about this topic, but I
soon added it to the other interviews. It seemed like a practical way for the
students to talk about social class. Even though the interview went well, I was
surprised at how many of the students considered themselves to be middle class.
I had to start to think about how to deal with this issue. At the end of interview
two, I told them the topic for the next interview would focus on academics.
Almost all of the students immediately started telling me about the academic challenges that they had already begun to experience. I knew that they would have a lot to share during interview three.

Interview Three.

The focus of interview three was the students’ academic experiences and self-regulated learning. Interview three was also scheduled during the middle of their second quarter. The goal of scheduling at this critical time was so the students would have received their grades from autumn quarter, but they also would have received some initial feedback in their current classes as well. This feedback would allow the participants to have a more informed sense of their academic performance. Similar to interview two, I e-mailed the students to arrange the time, date, and location of the interview. I also asked the participants to e-mail me a copy of their unofficial academic transcript a day or so prior to the interview. The goal of having the transcript was to allow the participants to see and reflect on their first quarter grades before the interview. I asked them to think about which classes were their most challenging and which classes were not that difficult.

At the end of interview three, I raised the question of social class again and asked if they had given it any more thought and if their thoughts had changed since our last meeting. I also informed them that interview four would be the final interview for the study and would start to wrap everything up. Following the interviews, I continued adding to the student profiles that I had previously created. I also communicated with the transcriptionist, typed rough
notes for the interviews to assist her with transcription and they were transcribed by February 27th.

Interview Four.

The focus of interview four was to integrate social class, academics and self-regulation as well as the students’ sense of identity. After receiving some initial feedback about the questions, I decided that the flow and sequence of questions would need to be based on the student’s responses. Although all the students were asked all of the questions, the order of the questions varied based on the flow of the conversation with each participant. Similar to interviews two and three, interview four also took place during the last half of the quarter. Again, this was to give the students an opportunity to receive some grades and have a sense of how they were doing that quarter as well. Similar to the other interviews, I e-mailed the students to plan the time, date, and location for the interview.

After not getting a reply from Melanie, I sent a second e-mail reminder asking her to let me know when she would like to have the final interview. In her reply, Melanie told me that she was experiencing too much stress as well as some health-related difficulties and she withdrew from the study. I followed up with an e-mail asking if we could conduct an abbreviated meeting which she did not reply to. I sent one last e-mail thanking her for her participation, making her aware of the resources available to students at the Counseling Center, and asking her if she would like me to mail her final gift card to her. I never received a reply.
With this interview, I also asked the students to send me a copy of their unofficial transcript again so we could both think about how they did Winter Quarter prior to our meeting. To get the students to talk about social class a little differently than when I asked them about it in interview two, I modified a table found in Woolfolk’s (2007) *Educational Psychology* titled, “Selected Characteristics of Different Social Classes”. The original table compares the upper class, middle class, working class and lower class based on income, occupation, education, home ownership, health coverage, neighborhoods, afford children’s education, and political power. I was concerned that if a student saw that she belonged in the lower class group that the term would prevent her from being honest with me about that characterization. Working poor seemed to be a little less judgmental than lower class. The table gave the students a different perspective to think about social class. While some of the participants reacted somewhat negatively and thought that the table was simply presenting stereotypes for a group, for others, this was probably the first time that they could think about how others perceived their family in these terms.

Slight change in questions.

Originally, I was going to ask the participants to reflect upon the social class status of their academic advisors. After looking through the previous transcripts, it became clear that I wanted them to try to determine the social class for an adult from their hometown. For several of the students this led us to discuss what they did for part-time employment. This was a very rich discussion
that provided insights into how social class awareness was shaped by employment experiences. I also finished the student profiles after the interview. However, I learned that my transcriptionist was not going to be available to work on this set of interviews. I decided to transcribe them myself and this added considerable time before I was able to begin data analysis. Transcriptions for interview four were completed by July 12.

Transcription.

Data were analyzed starting with initial data collection. However, prior to more analysis, the interviews needed to be transcribed and I quickly became overwhelmed with the amount of data that required transcription. I sought a transcriptionist to assist in this task. However, the one drawback to using this particular transcriptionist was that she was not familiar with using digital technology. Through a series of e-mails and trial and error, we eventually worked out the difficulties and she was able to transcribe for me. One of the things I did to assist her was listen to the interview and type up rough notes. She could use these notes to assist in the transcription and identity important aspects of the interview. Interview two was transcribed by February 19th.

Data analysis

Because the focus of the research rested on the participants and how social class, identity, and self-regulated learning intersect during their transition to college, it became necessary to conduct a case by case analysis of the data. For each participant, I made three passes through the data. The first pass was
for social class. The second pass was for self-regulated learning, and the third pass was for identity.

Within each pass, I conducted a line by line analysis of the data and used open coding to look for patterns in the data. As I coded, I developed my code book for each a priori pass. After I finished the pass through the set of transcripts for that participant, I summarized the findings related to that topic in a data table. I continued to do this for all participants.

I was challenged with how to really see Kegan’s identity theory in the data. To help, I consulted with Dr. Davis. Together we created a table that outlined a description of the phases found in Kegan’s theory and what those would mean in terms of social class. Quotations were used from the interview to demonstrate development within that phase. The Kegan chart was created for all of the participants. The other suggestion that I did not implement was to focus on all the places where the participant says, “I…” by looking for all the “I” statements, it becomes easier to think about identity in a more succinct fashion. I share this here for other scholars to consider alternate ways to investigate identity.

As I coded subsequent interviews for identity, I made a conscious decision to look for evidence of Kegan’s theory and noted it on the transcript so it would be easier to build the table for that participant. After conducting all three passes for the first two participants, I returned to the code book and elaborated my codes by adding definitions and exemplary quotes that illustrated what I meant by that code.
Defining the codes allowed me to see that there were some areas of overlap within codes. I made note of which codes seemed to blur with others and returned to better understand the differences and similarities later.

Axial Coding.

Following the open coding, I began axial coding. Beginning with one participant, I printed the interview transcripts onto labels. Based on what I had seen across all of the transcripts, I created index cards that had the “theme” heading that I anticipated that I would see in the data. I also believed that there would be other themes that I did not anticipate and this was a correct assumption. Starting with social class, I read through the transcript, noting where and how I originally coded the data. I made a determination to see if that code really “fit” what was being said in the transcript. I also looked for intersections in the data and would refer to the transcripts that were coded for the other a priori topics (self-regulated learning and identity).

If there was an intersection, then I placed a sticker on the original card. I placed a yellow sticker on the original card if there was an intersection between social class and self-regulated learning. I placed a green sticker on the original card if there was an intersection between social class and Identity and I placed a blue sticker on the original card if there was an intersection among all three a priori topics. I also created a new card for the intersection. The new card would include the codes found from the intersecting topics. When the coded piece of data did not fit on one card, a red sticker was placed on both cards and the related card numbers were written on the red sticker. I chose not to create an
index card for the other apriori topics at this time. I did not want the first pass (social class) to influence the subsequent passes through the data. I thought it more important in the analysis that each construct contribute to the other, but not blur it. After I concluded social class, I continued this process for self-regulated learning and Identity.

This process allowed me to clearly see the important themes at work in the data and helped me to recognize the relationships among the three a priori topics. Following the axial coding, I created a findings table to organize the themes and patterns that were evident from axial coding. Themes and patterns were identified across the three areas: social class, identity, and self-regulated learning.

Peer Debriefing.

I recruited a group of six peers to help confirm the codes that I saw in the data, to assist in making my assumptions more conscious, and to help me with determining which stories need to be told from this data. Five of the peers were graduate students in education and the 6th volunteer had recently graduated with her Ph.D. in Teacher Education. I e-mailed the peers and asked if they would be willing to code a small chunk of data and then engage in a two hour discussion about the data. I purposefully sent each of the peers a selection of data from the same participant. By giving the peer reviewers data from the same participant, my goal was to provide them with some depth of understanding relative to one person, enhance the comprehensiveness of the conversation that we would have
following their coding, and to provide them with a similar data analysis experience that I had used that ensured integrity within the data.

I asked pairs of the reviewers to focus on one of the a priori topics: social class, identity, and self-regulation. I invited them to code for each theme based on their own academic expertise and familiarity with that topic. Because I knew the peer reviewers who were looking at identity were not very familiar with Kegan’s theory, I also sent them an excerpt from my literature review that summarized Kegan’s identity theory. I did not expect that they would develop expertise to effectively code the data according to Kegan’s theory. Rather, I wanted to expose them to the content and ask a few general questions.

When we met as a group, I asked the group to write down their thoughts to three questions. One prompt focused on the coding, the second on their assumptions as researchers, and the third was regarding what story needed to be told based on the data they read and analyzed. After writing, we had a discussion where each person had an opportunity to share what he or she saw in the excerpt of data. After individual sharing, we had a conversation about common themes found in the data.

Similar to me, the peer reviewers recognized the importance of determination and self-reliance within the data. Two of them related to the participant because they were raised by a single mom as well. They thought that this was an important story to tell from the data. Different from what I saw, the peer reviewers raised the concern that this particular participant may have difficulty developing trusting relationships with others. While I recognized this
possibility found within the data, the nature of trusting relationships is not a primary focus of this research and it is difficult to determine that based on the questions that were asked in interviews. The peer reviewers also shared their written notes that were used to code the data and answer the prompts that I provided during the session.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview 1. High school experience

I’m going to ask you some questions about your high school experience and what that was like for you. I’m also going to ask you about your family. Lastly I’m going to ask about how you are feeling about starting college. If at any point you don’t want to answer a question or you want to skip a question, please let me know and we can go onto the next one.

Overall, how would you describe your high school experience?

Why do you describe it in this way?

What do you like to do for fun?

Let’s talk about your friends. Tell me about them.

How long have you known them?

How did you meet them?

What do you like to do with them?

Tell me about your family.

What does your dad do for work?

Your mom?
Do you have any siblings? How old are they? (If older, did any of them go to college and where?)

When you think about your classes, what do you think is the most valuable thing that you have learned in high school?

What is your favorite class? Why?

What is your least favorite class? Why?

Overall, how well do you do in school?

Describe your school to me. Tell me about the different groups of students.

What group or groups do you hang out with?

Tell me about one of your proudest accomplishment.

Tell me about one of the most difficult challenges that you have faced.

What are your thoughts about what kind of career or job you would like to have?

What led you to this decision?

So based on what you have told me about school, friends, accomplishments and challenges, how would you describe yourself?

What’s important to you?

What do you value?

So, in general how are you feeling about starting college? Why do you think you’re feeling this way?

How do you think that going to college will change your life?

Before we end our conversation, do you have anything else that you want to talk about?

**Interview 2. Social Class**
If you had a million dollars, and could only buy one thing, what would you buy?
Why would you make that purchase?
How do you know if someone is rich, middle class, or poor?
Do you think being rich or poor makes a difference in how you do in school?
Do you think that high school teachers treat kids the same if they’re rich or poor?
What about college professors or TAs? Why/why not?
Tell me what you know about social class – what does it mean to you?
When thinking about your family, what social class do you think your family belongs to?
How long has that been the case?
Why do you describe yourself in this way?
Did you think that affected how you grew up? Or how you’re transitioning to college?
Do you think that kids hang out based on what social class they belong to?
Why/why not?
How do you know?
What about your friends? Do you think they are of the same or a different social class background?
How do you think your life would be different if your family was from (lower/upper) class?

Last time we talked about how you described yourself and what was important to you. You said things like ....
How do you think your social class background relates to that description?

**Interview 3 Protocol**

*Class Ranking*

Let’s talk about last quarter’s classes. Rank them from most difficult to least difficult for me.

Why did you rank them in this order?

Let’s do the same thing for your courses this quarter. Why did you rank them in this order?

When you decided what classes to register for did you think about this at all?

Do you think that it will affect what classes you register for in the spring?

Do you have any goals that you are trying to achieve this quarter? How do you plan on reaching them?

*Class Discussions*

Assume that you’re in (most difficult Autumn Quarter course) and your professor says that you are going to have a test on a specific topic. Did you have a method you used to help you learn and remember what was discussed in class?

Now assume that you are in (most difficult Winter Quarter course) and your professor says that you are going to have a test on a specific topic. Did you have a method you used to help you learn and remember what was discussed in class?

*Final Test / Paper*

In most college courses, you either have a paper or a final exam at the end of the quarter and that test is usually worth a substantial percentage of your final grade.
Do you have a particular method for preparing for final tests or papers? Do you find that you took different approaches to studying based on the course?

Motivation for Homework

Many times students have problems completing homework assignments because there are other more interesting things they would rather do. Do you have any particular method for motivating yourself to complete your homework under these circumstances?

Has your approach for keeping yourself motivated changed at all from last quarter to this quarter?

To stay on top of classes, students have to prepare when they are not in class. Do you have any particular methods for improving your study habits when you are not in class?

Post Secondary / College Prep

Now you had previously taken classes at a community college. How do your experiences there compare to your experiences here at OSU?

Which would you say has been more challenging?

How have the expectations been different?

Let’s say you were taking a course during your post-secondary experience. You knew that you wanted to earn a certain grade on a test or assignment. How did you know that you were prepared to reach that goal?

How is that different at OSU?

LGOS
How does being a Land Grant Opportunity Scholar affect the way that you approach studying and grades?

Do you think you do things differently, in terms of studying, than other students because of the scholarship?

_Social Class and Academics_

Last time we talked a lot about social class. I was wondering if your thoughts about social class have changed at all. What are your thoughts about the connection between social class and academics – is there any relationship?

Do you think that wealthy students do better or worse? Why / why not?

Do you think that poor students do better or worse? Why / why not?

What about middle class students?

So what is it that – what contributes to how you do academically? How do students who do well know how to study and what to study and how often to study? What motivates them?

_Interview 4:_

Let’s start out by talking about winter quarter and how you did.

1. Overall, describe how winter quarter compared to autumn quarter?

2. And how do those two quarters compare to spring quarter so far?

3. In terms of goals you talked about (reference last quarter’s goals). Did you achieve them?

   3 A. How do you feel about those goals?

   3 B. What did you learn about yourself in the process?
4. What about this quarter – do you have any goals? (Note: Remember to ask about specific grades as well as general approach to studying). During our last interview we discussed how you studied in Autumn Quarter and Winter Quarter. How are you approaching studying this quarter? Does it differ for different subjects? Why and how?

(Note: make notes regarding study approaches during Winter quarter to reference during follow-up questions)

6. I want you to take a moment and look at your advising report. As you’re looking at it, I want you to think about three things for each class.

1. The grade that you received.
2. The amount of effort that you put into studying and assignments
3. What you learned from the class.

7. Tell me about your experience with your most challenging course and your easiest course. What do you notice and remember about the grade, your effort, and what you learned?

8. Describe your motivation to me. (leave open ended and follow up w/some of the following…)

9. Have you noticed a change in your motivation during the year?

10. What role does your family play in your motivation?

11. What role does the scholarship play?

12. How do your future career aspirations influence you?
13. How do your friends, roommates, and other students in classes influence you?

14. What motivated you in high school? What motivates you now? Do you notice any differences?

15. Now in the past we have talked about motivation, academic success and social class. (I've asked you before and it's ok if you don't remember what you said). What relationship (if any) do you see among motivation, academic success and social class?

Social Class Chart

16. I want to talk some more about social class and to do that I have a chart that I'd like you to look at.

(Show chart and walk through)

a. What things on this chart are familiar to you and how you have thought about social class before?

b. Is there anything on this chart that you have not thought about before in terms of social class? Why do you think that is?

c. Where would you place yourself on this chart? Why do you describe yourself in that way? What do you think about that? How does it make you feel?

d. Before I showed you this chart would you have put yourself in that group? Why/why not?

e. Where do you want to be on this chart? Why? How do you plan on getting there?
f. Think about some of your friends here on campus. Where would you put them? Why?

g. How about some of your friends from home. Where would you put them? Why?

h. Lastly, think about one of your professors, TAs, or some other “non-student” on campus (like an academic advisor) where would you put them? Why?

i. When you think about your experiences growing up and specifically getting ready for college, how do you think being part of the __________ class helped you to be ready for college?

j. In what ways do you think you haven’t been prepared? Why do you think that is – is there any connection to these things and your own social class?

k. Do you see any connections between what we just talked about and your study habits throughout this year? (Follow up questions related to preparedness, income, parent’s education/ siblings, etc.)

17. How does your social class background influence your motivation and your goals?

a. What skills do you need to achieve those goals?

b. Tell me how you learned those skills. (Follow up is self-reliance and/or role models)

18. Overall, how would you describe your first year of college?

a. What have you learned about yourself? About others?

b. How do you think you have changed?
c. Do you think that your parents or your friends from home would notice any changes in you during this year? What would they say?

d. How about your friends here. How would they say that you changed from when you first arrived?

e. What would you say has been the most challenging part of transitioning form high school? What has been the easiest?

f. If you were to do it all over again, what would you do different and what would you do the same?

19. When you think back across the summer, the start of Autumn Quarter, Winter Quarter and now Spring Quarter, what will be some of your favorite memories?

a. Describe the times that you had an “aha!” moment when you realized something about yourself. What do you think triggered that?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Upper Class</th>
<th>Middle Class</th>
<th>Working Class</th>
<th>Working Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$160,000 +</td>
<td>$80,000-$160,000 (1/2)</td>
<td>$25,000 - $40,000</td>
<td>Below $25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Corporate, professional, family money</td>
<td>White-collar, skilled blue collar</td>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>Minimum-wage unskilled labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Prestigious colleges and professional schools</td>
<td>High school, college or professional school</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>High school or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>At least one home</td>
<td>Usually own home</td>
<td>About half own a home</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Health Coverage</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Neighborhoods</td>
<td>Exclusive or comfortable</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Modest</td>
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<td>Usually</td>
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<td>National, state, or local</td>
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Table 4. Selected Characteristics of Different Social Classes